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ABSTRACT

A book of writings by adult students in the Hartford, Connecticut, area is presented. The book represents a celebration of the students and their tutors, whose writings about the students' work are also included. For many of the writings, the prompt is provided as an aid to other teachers who may want to talk and write about similar subjects. Students and tutors worked together to talk about stories and poems, lives, and goals; they then wrote their responses and tutors helped them with spelling and punctuation. As little editing as possible was done prior to production of this book. The writings include the following: "Welcome to My World"; "Coming to America, Remembering Our Homelands"; "Our Families, Ourselves"; "Reading, Writing, Learning, Teaching"; "We Worship, We Celebrate"; "Partnerships"; and "Thanks to Literacy Volunteers." The final selection, "Tutor Talk," offers suggestions for working with these learner-generated materials, including ideas for writing projects. Appended are several selections for new readers, such as a summary of a Langston Hughes' story, and other student writing samples. (LB) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

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WELCOME TO OUR WORLD

A BOOK OF WRITINGS

BY AND FOR

STUDENTS AND THEIR TUTORS

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The making of this book drew on the talents of many people. It is truly a product of many literacies. The writers represented in this book have worked hard and, naturally, deserve our gratitude. Some of the student writers also helped with editing work. Karlene Barnett and her colleagues in the LVA-CT office deserve special mention for typing and preparing the book for publication.

Gail Michelson, the tutor for Dewey Brown, gave unstintingly of her time for editing and proofreading. Other tutors who helped with editing and other aspects of the book include Teri Fuller, Sheila Lehman, and Bill Perkins. We are grateful to Betsy Girouard who kindly offered her photographs to students as inspiration. Some of these images are included in the book. George Demetrion, Director of the Bob Steele Reading Center, deserves our gratitude for his cheerful support and the vision that set and kept this project in motion. Doris Anne Hauptman, Director of the Literacy Volunteers of Greater Hartford, made helpful suggestions and supported the project from start to finish.

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INTRODUCTION

"In writing this, I don't want to sell you a dream, but I want you to know how good it feels to read a book and to understand it. It's like a first love."

L.F.

My name is Sharon Smith and I am a Literacy Volunteers tutor at the Bob Steele Reading Center in Hartford, Connecticut. I work with adults in a writing workshop, many of whom have contributed to the book you hold in your hands. It is a book of writings by adult students from all over the Hartford area. It's a book for readers and for writers, for students and for tutors. It is dedicated to the learner in all of us.

With this book, we at the Center are celebrating the students and their tutors. Most of the students have become comfortable with putting their thoughts, feelings, and memories in writing. They now want to share them with you. Tutors' writings about their work are also included. We hope that all these writings, including this introduction, will give both students and tutors interesting reading experiences, plenty to talk about, and ideas for writing projects. For many of the writings, we have included the prompt, so you can talk and write about the same subjects and issues we did. For example, in Chapter 3, a story about grandparents inspired some autobiographical pieces. In Chapter 7, Section 3, learners responded to questions by writing profiles of themselves. Other ideas can be found in the chapter called "Tutor Talk" and in the appendix.

Let me give you a general idea of how these writings were written. Students and tutors worked in groups or one-on-one. They talked about stories and poems. Then, they wrote their responses to these works. In one case, the tutors tape-recorded a discussion and typed out parts of it for the book.

Students also wrote about their lives and their goals. Often, students read about an important issue like the right to free speech. They talked with each other about this

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issue and then wrote down their thoughts and feelings. Some of the essays and stories students responded to were, like most of the writings in this book, by students.

In the beginning, students did not worry about spelling and punctuation. They just got their ideas down on paper. Then, on their own and with the help of tutors, they revised these first drafts. There are some examples of these first drafts in this book in the appendix. Then the stories and essays were gathered for this book. The students were using a method called the writing process.

Before printing this book, a group of tutors edited both the writings of students and the writings of tutors. Sometimes we changed the spelling. In some cases, we changed the order of the words, took words out, or added words so the pieces could be read more easily. We changed the punctuation when we thought it would help the reader.

Sometimes the students helped their tutors revise tutor writing. With this book, the first one we have printed, we did not have time to ask students to edit work of other students. Next time we will. Students in one group helped to put the writings from the chapter called "Welcome To My World" in an order they liked.

We edited all the writings as little as possible. We tried very hard not to change the meaning. One editor did not want us to type every writing. He thought it would be better to put the handwritten pieces in. We did that in a few cases so you can see for yourself how a writing looked before it was typed. Sometimes we made typing mistakes and we fixed those too.

We made sure that the authors wanted their names used. Sometimes they didn't so we just wrote ANONYMOUS after the piece. That just means no name given.

In the book you will find many kinds and levels of writing and many kinds of writers. The students, tutors, and I hope you will find the writing interesting and that you will be able to see yourself in these pages as you read through them.

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CHAPTER 1
WELCOME TO MY WORLD

My Special Place For Relaxation

My favorite place in Hartford is Elizabeth Park, especially in Spring and Summer, because at those times the flowers begin to bud. It looks like a magic world of color.

Elizabeth Park is a very peaceful place, where you hear the wind when it moves the leaves, and the birds when they are singing. This park has a lot of trees and flowers, such as carnations, violets, and daffodils. The smell of the flowers and the trees is like many perfumes put together.

I usually go to my favorite place when I want to be relaxed, or when I have problems and I cannot solve them. The only thing I do is go there and look for some place where I can sit. Then I begin to reflect by myself and I fix my thoughts to get the best solution.

Student: Zaira Reyes

Tutor: Julia Barcelo

Hunting

One time my friends Ted and Mark went hunting.

They spent a few hours in the forest but were not able to catch any game. On the way home Ted and Mark bought a pheasant and tied it to the tree and shot it.

Afterwards, they showed the pheasant to their friends and told them what a great time they had hunting.

Andy Klukowski

It is nice to be walking in the tall grass with a lot of peace and quiet atmosphere where there are big trees that make a lot of shade to make it cool. It is nice walking with no straps on my nose. Every now and then the horse runs to make his legs strong, taking a walk with no human on his back.

June 18, 1990

S

A boy from South America wakes up three times a week very early in the morning to go fishing. That is one way he helps his family to stay alive. Today he went fishing and he caught a rare fish called a trout. When he was five years old he caught a three hundred pound shark.

ANONYMOUS

June 18, 1990

9

I like birds.

Birds Fly.

When I look at birds it makes me think of freedom.

I like to watch them.

Birds are like people.

ANONYMOUS

April 26, 1990

Welcome To My World

Here I am, standing in this lake all by myself.

That is the way I feel. You will never believe that this was the same place I was at last month.

Humans had made this lake a mess. Humans are a big problem of our environment.

They will build their high buildings and their streets and highways. They will spill their oil in the lake and oceans that will kill a lot of sea life.

If your world is like mine, you know what I see and feel.

From where I stand, I see a lot closer than man.

P.S. I am writing this essay from a still picture, from what I see from it. D.M.

Derrick Matthews

June 13, 1990

CHAPTER 2
COMING TO AMERICA
REMEMBERING OUR HOMELANDS

I came to the United States on April 25, 1980 with my husband. I was 2 months pregnant. We lived in my sister's house approximately 2 months. After we moved to our own apartment, my husband started to work and me, too. I worked in an insurance agency. For me it was an excellent experience, because I wanted to have a good future. I started in the filing department, and after one month I wrote applications for automobiles. I did accounting, also. Afterwards, I took a position of management at an agency. It was 8 years of hard work, but very good for me. After I moved to another job it was another experience because I experienced discrimination against Hispanic people, but fortunately I can now talk more English. I quit and I found another job. I like it and every day I learn something at my new job.

I have two daughters, 8 years old and 4 years old, and my husband. They are the biggest thing that God gave me.

Anonymous

Hi!

My name is Ming-yu Cho. I came from Taiwan. I have been here eight months. Maybe, I'm not sure. I have three brothers and two sisters. I have one sister in U.S.A. She lives in other city. I live here in my uncle's house and my grandfather lives with us. My father came too with me, and I have a cousin. Her name is Ming-en Cho.

If you ask me, "Do you like U.S.A.?," I will say I like it here. If you ask me, "Taiwan and U.S.A. which one you like?," I will say both, because two different country, and Taiwan have good things U.S.A. has not but U.S.A. have good things Taiwan has not. So it is very difficult. Both I like.

Taiwan's weather better than here. Because here have snow. Taiwan has not. But in Los Angeles weather look like Taiwan. And Taiwan's big city Taipei is very good city. I live there, because Taipei things are very good. Like clothes and shoes are more in vogue than other city. And these things are very expensive, and so many kinds. If someday you want go to Taiwan, you will love there.

I have two American friends. They went to Taiwan [Taipei]. Then they came back here. I asked them, "You kids like Taipei?" They say, "Yes." Then I asked again, "If you kids have free time, you kids want go to Taipei again?" They say "Yes." So you can think about it. Taiwan is very very very good. How you think?

Ming-Yu cho

June 4, 1990

Lisbon In The Past 20 Years And Now

Lisbon city in the past 20 years has not changed much because it is preserving its historical areas. But around the outskirts of the city much change has taken place. For one thing there are many new jobs so a lot of new people have moved into the outskirts. The cost of living is much better now than it was 20 years ago.

Lisbon has nice beaches and lots of entertainment. It also has nice gardens with many statues made of old brass. The landscapes also are beautiful.

Lisbon is a tourist place; a lot of people from England, Germany, Morocco, and many other countries come to Lisbon which is the principal stopping point for vacationers who want to travel anywhere in Portugal. The weather in Lisbon is good all year round.

Joao Figeiredo

I was born in Jamaica on 1 July 1923.

I came to the United States of America in 1954.

I work for one place for 28 years.

I am very good at reading.

I came to the U.S.A. permanently in 1954. I became a U.S. citizen.

I work for one company for 28 years in the state of Connecticut.

I own the house I live in, but you have to work very hard.

It was five girls and six boys. My father was very strict.

I also worked in Wisconsin on a farm for Stokeley Van Camp.

This is my fifth time in the country. I was a good worker.

Two sisters and two brothers are still alive.

My Brother lives in England. One sister still lives in Jamaica.

ANONYMOUS

January 25, 1990

Machu Pichu

Machu-Pichu is the most interesting place that I know. Since I went there I have been asking myself: "How could the Incas do it? How could they get those big stones and put them together without any equipment?"

The most famous Inca citadel of Machu Pichu was built on high ridge near Cuzco. It is a conglomeration of terraces, house compounds, courts, stairs, and temples. Most of the construction was done with rough stones, but some of the important units are built of carefully dressed and fitted stones. They are so well fitted that if you look closely you won't see any holes between the stones.

The Incas built all this by hand, without any construction equipment. The stones were very large and heavy, and were carried by hand up the mountain This was hard work because there weren't any roads.

I believe that my ancestors were very strong, intelligent and hard working. They built that citadel without any knowledge of architecture. As a Peruvian I feel very proud of what the Incas accomplished so many years ago, and which still exists in its original form.

Zaira Reyes

My Worst Job

This is a description of the first and worst job that I ever had since coming to this country. I worked at Mcdonald's for five months. This was enough time to know that I should quit.

I got so mad while working there because I had to do the worst jobs and did them without saying anything. At that time, my English was very poor and I couldn't protest. I mopped the floor, took out the garbage, and washed the big dishes.

The time I spent there helped me to realize that I needed to learn English. Through communication I could show and express my own feelings and my own thoughts.

Zaira Reyes

Dear Mr. Demetrion,

I am sending a note to say thank you for your kindness. I am so excited to receive the HARTFORD NOTES with the story printed in the student corner. I have one more story called "Lucky Bird" to send to you. This is a true story. I hope you will like it. I would like to share this story with other students so we can learn together and do better reading and writing. Thank you very much for helping me print the story.

Sincerely yours,

Nu D. Tran

Lucky Bird

I am a little bird. I came here from far away. I am lucky in the United States of America. I met a lot of new friends and good teachers; they are all good to me. When I came to America, I didn't know any English at all or any friends. I escaped from Vietnam. I was one of the boat people.

I came to this country by myself. The beginning was very difficult. I had a lot of problems, because of the language. I remember the first night I arrived in Connecticut. I was so hungry but didn't know how to ask for food to eat. My sponsors were nice , but they didn't understand me; they thought maybe I was tired because of the long flight. Who knew I was hungry and cold?

continues on next page

That night it was hard to sleep. Two weeks later they sent me to school. Every morning they gave me a sandwich and a couple cookies for lunch. In the afternoon, they came to take me home. After three months I got a job. I was working a Hi-G Electric Company; it was a second shift job. At that time, I moved out to live with one Vietnamese friend. In the morning I still went to school. I met a lot of American friends. They were nice and friendly; they taught me everything about the job. In this country I have learned so many things and met different kinds of people.

Now, I work at Oak Hill School Institute. My job is cashier. Also, I have a family: mother, husband and a daughter. We have our own house and a car. My husband and I work so hard to take care of the family, but unfortunately my husband doesn't know English. He can't pass the driving test. Every day he has to walk to work or take the bus. The good thing is that America has a lot of Literacy Volunteers in every state; they are great. Now we both have a tutor; we meet for two hours each week. Martha is my tutor. Minh's tutor is Kelly. They both are very nice and are helping us to learn English. My English is getting much better; so is Minh's. Now he can read and write a little bit of English. We both are very thankful.

God Bless America!

Nu D. Tran

October 17, 1990

[To see a rough draft of this essay, turn to the appendix.]

My name is Winston. I am from Jamaica. I work at Boomoomoos, it is a Jamaican bakery. In the bakery we cook chicken curry, goat and beef patty. My goal is to get my driver's license, so I can go to night school. I want to get a better job so I can make more money.

December, 1990

Shanghai is a big city in China. Many people live there. There are a lot of parks, stores, hotels, restaurants and theaters and much more.. The buses are always full because too many people want to go everywhere. They only can by bus. Shanghai is a big and noisy city.

Peking is the capital city in China. Peking is a big city, too. But it doesn't have a lot of people. There are many hotels in Peking because it is the capital city. So many businesses meet in there. Peking is quieter than Shanghai.

Lu-Yan Guo

January 29, 1990

San Diego and Hartford are both nice cities. But they have many different things. San Diego is a beautiful city and has very good weather all year. It is very comfortable and makes people always happy. San Diego is a famous tourist city. Many people go there to spend their vacation every year. There are many beautiful parks and beaches. Also there are many good hotels.

Hartford is an old city. There are different seasons all year. Hartford is quieter than San Diego. Many old people like living here because they feel safe. Hartford has some museums. They are very good. If you want to go to New York for a visit it is not too far to go. You only need to drive two hours.

Fei-Fei Soon

January 29, 1990

CHAPTER 3
OUR FAMILIES, OURSELVES

Love

What is love to me?

Love is not jealous.

Love is a beautiful thing with people.

It shows you another side of a person

When you are in love (before & after).

I love to sing, singing to me is like a person getting high, it makes me forget some of my problems, I like that kind of love.

I love buying things at times for myself as well as for other people.

That's what love is.

Love is loving your brothers and sisters meaning, as a Christian, my co-workers, or my real brothers and sisters.

Love is trying to understand your neighbor when he or she is doing things that are not all together right.

For some people love is money, what you can do with it.

Love is how you as a person feel about yourself.

Love, to me, turns to hate when someone you love hurts you.

Love to me is a mother, is carrying a child in your womb.

Caring for that child, when he or she is sick; you are there when they start to walk.

Love is communication with each other.

It helps to understand each other and have respect for each other.

Lorraine Tutler,

August 13, 1990

Love

Love is a beautiful thing, it all depends on how you describe it. I think that being in a nice environment with people that give you respect is a way to describe it. I love people who try to help themselves because they are in the same boat I am in. You have to come out of the shell and deal with it. Love can be nice and it can be sad. I love to see all of you in the room. That's love to me. I think that you have to build love, it don't come in one day. I just love to see people happy.

M. J.

August 13, 1990

Love

I think love is a beautiful feeling. Love is something that people should cherish for life. It takes a special person to be a gentle lover and a good friend. After my last experience with love, I said I would never care about anyone again. Then I remembered what my mother said about me being tight with money. She said you are not only stopping money from going out, but you are stopping money from coming in as well. I put up a wall around myself to keep out the pain, but did not realize that I was keeping out the joy as well.

God, help me be a good sport in the game of love. Help me to accept the bad breaks as part of the game and to remember that you win some and lose some. I guess that I do not like to lose at all.

Gary K. Birden

April 29, 1990

You have to get it into your mind, you are going to make the grade.
The more you study the more you'll learn.
You can make it if you try. If there is no struggle there is no progress.
When you walk through a storm hold your head up high, and don't be afraid of the dark. Behind every dark cloud there's a golden sky. And you'll never walk alone.

Sarah Jefferson

October 10, 1990

Sun set and the night roll around,
I can feel my emotion come down,
but now as I pull back the cover of my bed
saying to myself tonight I'll forget
tears falling like the rain,
tears--another hardly knows my pain--
tears--all the tears your heart wouldn't hide--
tears--now the tears become a good nice rain.
If I can go back and change the hand on the clock,
my heart would be saying you heard it, tick tock.
For the one I love has gone far away.
It gets harder and harder to face another day--
tears falling like the rain,
tears--another hardly knows my pain--
tears--all the tears your heart wouldn't hide--
tears--now the tears become a good nice rain,
every night when I lay my head down to sleep.

C. D.

January 1991

[Most of the memories in the following stories were stirred up when the authors read Darlene Weaver's story, "My Grandparents." If you would like to read it, you can find it in the appendix.]

My Grandparents

I was real close to my grandparents because I visited them every time. After school, I visited my grandmother and she gave me and my grandfather some food. Sometimes my mother took her to the store and bought groceries for the family.

Julio Gomets,
February 18, 1991

My grandparents were good people. My grandmother liked to go fishing. She always wanted me to go fishing on Saturday. If the fish were biting, she wanted me to stay.

J.P.
January 17, 1991

I never knew my grandparents. I listened to my mother tell the lives. Where they live is easy and modest. They didn't have many technology advances. They lived in the countryside. They had animals: horses, cows, sheep, and barnyard fowl: turkey and chickens.

My grandmother cooked the meals with firewood. She made the bread and preserved fruit or vegetables for the winter. My grandfather sowed wheat and vegetables. Their house didn't have drinking water or electric light. Always, she worked in his house, not studied or worked at a job. I dreamt, travelled, and studied and know much that's interesting about countries and nation.

[Claudia Arranga is an ESL student.]

Claudia Arranga
January 1991

In My Day

My grandmother took in washing and ironing. I would bring the clothes to her in a basket. I also made the fire for her around the pot. The fire was made with wood shavings from the caster factory.

Sometimes when I came from school she would give me a sweet potato from under the pot.

I would bring water from the church faucet. I would take the clothes back the next day. The lady's name was Mrs. Curlpepper.

Sarah Jefferson

My Grandparents

My grandparents used to be the most wonderful grandparents. They gave to me lots of love and good things. I have good memories. I miss them so much, I wish they were still alive. My grandparents were born in Portugal in a small town called Bolieda. My grandfather worked on a farm where he used to raise animals. I liked to play with small chickens, rabbits, dogs, and cats. Let me explain something.

My grandfather is my father's father and my grandmother is my mother's mother. They married when my other grandfather and grandmother died. My grandfather was the most wonderful person I ever knew. He liked to tell me interesting stories, and prayers, and some jokes. My grandmother was a very good grandmother but she was very strict with me and my sisters.

M. O.

January 14, 1991

My Grandparents

My grandparents were very loving grandparents. They liked and spoiled their grandkids. They were living in the country. When we visited them, they took us to the shops and bought lots of sweets. Then they took us around their friends and showed us to their friends. Then my grandparents took us to the pool. They put us into the pool and splashed the water on us.

We stayed for a while. My grandfather climbed the coconut tree and let us drink the coconut water. After we did that my grandparents sat under a tree and told us about their parents. We all started to laugh. It was getting dark so they took us home. My grandparents sat down in rocking chairs and started telling stories about an old goat and we laughed till we got tired and it was time to go to bed. My grandparents tucked us in our beds.

Elaine S.

December 17, 1990

January 14, 1991

Dear Grandmother and Daddy,

I am writing you this letter to let you know how I feel about everything you've done for me.

I love when we wake up for breakfast because mother would have pancakes, grits, eggs, bacon, and sausage on the table. Or we could have cold or hot cereal. Daddy would say prayers before we ate. I loved to come home for lunch because mother used to make it very special for us.

My grandmother would always wait for us after school was out to make sure we would get home O.K. I miss the time we used to watch T.V. together, and the long talks we used to have.

Mother and Daddy, if you could see T. and A., you could not believe how big they have grown. Now I have another little boy. You would love the way he smiles and how friendly he is with people. I know he would love to know both of you.

I miss the time we used to have cookouts on the back porch. I could remember when you used to take us to the store and to the park. I also remember the not so good times too. But the good times outweighed the bad times.

Mother and Daddy, if you could see your daughter and son you would be proud of them. Your son is a Deacon now and he is doing a good job. Mom is Mom; she's doing about the same. She has a new husband now but everything else is the same.

Love,

M.

January 14, 1991

My Grandparents

My grandparents are from Poland. They came to the United States and they worked very hard. My grandparents had eight children. My grandfather worked for the city of Hartford. My grandmother stayed home, and worked hard around the house. We stayed at our grandparents' house sometimes for the weekend. They took us kids to the movies and they bought us candy and soda.

I think the immigrants don't take things for granted. Americans sometimes take things for granted. You have to work hard for the things you want. But you will feel good in the end for the hard work you do.

The Hard Way

Last summer my husband and I went to France. We had a good time but it was hard because I did not speak French. When you ask someone how to get to some place, it was hard for them to speak in English.

Beverly D.

February 4, 1991

[Beverly responded in this essay to Esther Antoine's essay on the next page.]

Personal Questions

I think Esther had someone ask her a personal question in front of a lot of people at one time. I do not like it myself when people ask personal questions in front of people. I like it when they call you off to the side to ask you and it should stay personal and not go around.

Personal Questions

Esther Antoine

I hate it when someone asks me a personal question. Some people don't know what they are asking. I sure don't like it. I don't know what to say to them. If someone asks me a question I tell them off. I say, "How would you like it if I asked you that?" Some people are very rude and have no respect for themselves or other people.

["My name is Esther Antoine. I was born in Duncan but live in Westholme. I'm attending Malaspina College in Duncan, B.C. to get my education so I can teach little children." Reprinted with permission from Voices magazine]

In My Childhood

When I was a young child, as far as I could remember about my tenth birthday, I realized that I was adopted. It was hard for me. At first I wondered why my mother did that to me but it got easier as I got older.

When I was eleven, I was careless about what happened. My aunt had adopted me when I was six months old. My mother had a problem with her first husband. She had separated from her husband. At this time he had money. I had a brother and a sister that were taken from her. It was hard for her to deal with us at the time I was born. So my aunt helped my mom start a new life and took me, because she was getting married again.

M.

July 10, 1991

Daughter

My daughter is 21 years old. She is a very good daughter and is so much like me. She listens to me but doesn't like to speak Portuguese with me. Sometimes we have problems with conversations, but I understand because she is not Portuguese.

She is a very pretty girl, she is tall and thin. She has black hair and brown eyes.

My daughter lives with me, she likes school. She wants to be an English teacher. She goes to the University of Hartford, she will graduate in 1992. After that she will need two more years in college to get her Master's degree. Then she will take about two more years for her Doctoral degree.

M.O.

January 28, 1991

[The following student's tutor asked her to practice writing sentences.]

Dear Claire,

We are going to have a Women's Day at my church on November 11 at 11:30. We have to wear white and red - a red hat and red shoes. My daughter called me and told me she had a new job. She is a nurse's aide.

Dear Claire,

I went to see my daughter. We went to the store. The baby has two teeth. Elonda goes to school. My daughter has a new job. She works at a day care center.

continues on next page

I buy a T.V. Guide every week. I send a message to my mother in New Haven. Blue is my favorite color. My grandmother is buried out of state. The burial of my grandmother was nice. The epitaph was wrong. I am a religious person. I named my daughter Angel. My husband and son love watermelon.

I get busy around 1pm. I couldn't function right this morning. My sight is very good. I have confidence in myself. The policeman commands the dog to stop. The dog had a harness. The cat licked my hand. I could pass the obstacle. I went to a wrestling event.

Dear Claire,

I cooked Thanksgiving Dinner.

I had a sweet potato pie.

I cooked a cake.

My daughter came for dinner

I went to my mother's house.

Mrs. Nelson came for dinner.

She is an old lady who lives in a nursing home.

Anonymous

November 1990

My subject is about my mother and father, who taught me how to have something. When I left home, my daddy gave me $75. That's what I left home with. He did not give me any more money. That money lasted me from that day up to this day. I hope anyone who reads this will understand what I mean. I worked ever since I left home. I was raised on the farm in the country. I did not go out blowing my money in foolishness, but I spent it wisely.

I helped my parents until they died. One died in 1962, my mother in 1990. If you live to progress from your family, you can be somebody in life.

Bobbie Lee Hart

February 12, 1991

Autobiography

I was born in Jamaica. When I was a little girl, I like to play with my dollhouse with my friend. So my mother sent for me to come to America. I have come and go to school. I grew up and that's when I had my three children. I love my kids so I cook for them. I also wash for my kids, and help them do their homework.

My goal is to go back to school and get a good education. So I can get a good job to better myself. I want to get my G.E.D. When I get that, I am going back to college, and get my degree. I will like to work on a computer system. That what I will like to do for myself. I want to complete something out of life. I want to make more money for me and my family. I will like to get my driver's license so I can get my car. That the best thing that can happen to me.

I will like to travel with my family to places. That's what I want to do. I like to have a lot of fun with my kids. I like typing very much because it's what will help me find a good job to better myself and my family. The school I was going to was a very good school to go to. I like it very much.

Marva Jarrett

[This language experience story was told to a tutor who wrote it down.]

Clubs

When I first came to Hartford back in '65 I worked at Pratt. I met some friends and we formed this club in order to better ourselves.

One of our fellows got sick. He had tuberculosis. We took care of his family, bought groceries, tried to pay some of his bills. We also bought him a TV in the hospital.

After he got better he didn't want anything to do with the club. The club broke up. No one trusted anyone anymore. Some of us are still friends. That's the only club I belonged to.

Ivory Kimble

June 6, 1990

[This is also a language experience story.]

My family is in Jamaica. I live in Hartford on Magnolia Street with my Uncle Irvin.

I work at Copaco in Bloomfield. We put meat on the rack and push it to the man in the kitchen. We do this in the morning. In the afternoon we pack meat in the cooler. After that we put pickle and salt in the meat.

Sometimes they send me to the packing room. We pack hot dogs. When we're done we wash the machines. We mix some pickling salt.

We pump water onto the meat. We take the meat out and put it into a tank and push it into the cooler room. In the evening before we go home we clean up the place.

Ronald Chambers,

June 6, 1990

The reason why I come to the writing and reading workshop is to further my reading and writing skills to high levels.

My goals in life are to read very well without anyone helping me. And when I accomplish my goals in reading, my next goal is to be a dancer or a business person.

I was born in Jamaica, West Indies in a town named Spanish town. I grew up there with my mother and father, and with three sisters and brothers. Jamaica is a beautiful place. It is always sunny. They have a lot of beaches to go to and stores and manufacturers.

What I like to read most are love stories, Time magazine and the newspaper. The thing I like about myself is that I am a very loving, caring, and very sensitive person and also like nice clothes. If I want something in my life, I never stop trying until I get through.

I started working in this factory in 1989. It is in Hartford. It is a big building divided in two departments. In my department, we sew. We sew for eight airlines. We make seat covers and the other department cuts foam to make beds. We have 17 ladies. I am the only black person working there. The rest of the people are Spanish. Sometimes I feel very uncomfortable because they speak Spanish. I like my work because when we sew the seats for the planes, they take our picture. Sometimes it comes in the Hartford newspaper. It makes me feel good about myself.

When I am not working I like to play cards, bingo, and music. Sometimes I listen to the music but I also like to dance.

Elaine S.

[Here is Mr. McDaniel Kirksey's most recent story, written out by him and typed by me. He worked very hard to write it out. Ruth Schloss, Tutor]

My Trip To South Carolina

We took Route 85 into Easley, South Carolina, and from Easley into Pinkens. Pinkens is the town I grew up in. I was a farmer when I was young.

We kept our family home in town, so when we go home we stay there. My two brothers and my nephew went with me in my car. My sister lives in Anderson, about 30 miles away and she came back and forth to see us. She cooked for us. My niece got married while we were there. She had a wedding at the church. The wedding was nice. She is my sister's granddaughter. The mother of the bride died last year.

We stayed at the house and our family and friends came to visit. We have a big family. We had fun.

Mr. McDaniel Kirksey

[To see the 1st draft of this story, look in the appendix.]

My day went very good. First I went downtown. Then I met a girl. Her name was Brenda. She was a very attractive girl. We walked and talked all day. Then I asked her what she was doing later. And she said she had to be home. So I asked for her phone number. She gave it to me.

After that I went to a friend's house. My friend took me out to eat. After we ate, we went back to the house. When we got back, we watched a video tape about all night. It started to get late. So I went back outside. My friends were downstairs.

I wanted to go to the phone booth to call that girl I met downtown. I called and she was not at home. I started to walk. I went back to my friend's house. She had made a pie. I had eight pieces. It was good. About 4 o'clock in the morning I fell asleep. I got up about 6 and came home.

Anonymous

[Zigmunt Lacic tells two very complete stories, and does a fine job of showing the reader how he feels, as well as what happened. I think the spelling errors are much less important than his ability to bring his ideas together, and make them clear. I hope he will be writing more stories, and longer ones. J.D., tutor]

Fishing Trip

On the night of July 25, 1989, I went fishing with two of my friends. I also took along my 13 year old son who likes fishing very much.

The boat left from Rocky Neck at 7am and came back at 4pm. We went into the sea for about four hours, and then the fishing began which lasted only one hour.

We saw many other fishing boats. The scenery was beautiful; it looked like a city in the middle of the sea.

I caught only one fish, and my son caught four. He was very happy. We caught blue-fish. When we came home, we cooked the fish and had a very good dinner.

February 1991

Cruise to Canada

Five years ago I went with my wife on a cruise to Canada. We spent six days on a Polish ship named Stefan Batory. We cruised on the St. Lawrence River, and stopped at the Nova Scotia peninsula. In Nova Scotia, the temperature was cool in the middle of July, and it was very foggy. We went shopping, but everything was very expensive.

The food on the cruise was delicious, and the music was wonderful. We danced every night, from 8pm to 3 o'clock in the morning.

I have great memories from that cruise, and would like to go again someday, to the south islands.

Zigmunt Lacic

April, 1991

Excerpts From A Journal

8/31/89

My grandbaby is very bad. But I love her very much. When I'm at work I miss her. Teresa is always talking about moving, but I don't want her to take the baby with her. She is 21. When I was 19 I had my own family. But I know more than Teresa.

11/7/89

I thought about my grandbaby today. She goes to nursery school. It is fun when she comes home.

12/5/89

We talked about going on strike today. We don't want to go on strike, but we might have to.

12/14/89

I was glad that we didn't have to go on strike, so we are safe for the next 3 years. It makes me so happy to know that we are safe for now.

1/9/90

I share my car with my niece, and it is very hard to share my car. It always makes me hurry.

1/18/90

Tanya is 11-1/2. She is sick all the time, and sometimes I worry about her. She complains all the time. I feel she needs me, but I can't afford to stop working. Sometimes when I'm at work I think about Tanya. I feel that she wants me to stay home with her.

1/30/90

I don't have any time to read like I want to because I always have something to do. Maybe someday I will spend more time on reading.

continues on next page

2/13/90

Tanya wants to cook with me. But I don't have time to teach her. She can cook some things.

Tanya,

Thanks for the valentine card and roses. It means a lot to me that you are thinking of me.

I think it's nice to go on trips with your classmates. I hope you enjoy yourself. I'll miss the days that you are gone, but I want you to go.

Tanya, I know you want to learn how to cook, but when mama comes home from work, mama is tired. You can learn how to cook when you go to Fox.

4/10/90

I would like to read about law. I'm interested in it. Things that I've seen when I've gone to court with my son, I can't believe. That's why I want to learn more about law.

I would like all four of my kids to go to college. I would like all four to have a career--to have a better life than I had. But when I think about it, I had a good life compared to them because I had more respect for adults. The kids now don't have any respect for adults at all. I tried to teach my kids to have more respect for older people.

I have one that likes to act up in school. It seems like when he does act up in school and his teacher tells him she's going to call me, his whole personality changes.

To me, it's hard raising teenagers. But I thought it was going to be easier to raise a good family. The way I imagined--what I expected was for them to bring home their friends and introduce them to me. But it's nothing like that.

I learned that all four are very smart--so they didn't take after me. They're smart, but they don't want to use it.

D.W.

[This is a language experience "story".]

23 May Street
Hartford, CT 06105
March 29, 1990

Besho Japan
35 Uinage
Conentyn, Berbice

Hello Besho,

How are you? I hope you are fine. As for me, I am fine. Besho, I'm going to tell you about myself. I work in the morning and I come to school in the night. I feel very comfortable to come to school in the night, and I learn a lot during the time I'm here. I've had a lot of fun since I was here. I'm going to church when I have a chance. The only friend I keep here is my cousin.

How is your family? Say hello to each and everyone at home, especially Shawtee and Deyo. That's all for now, my only best friend from Guyana.

David Moses

[This student worked very hard to write a response to the three previous writers.]

Dear Zigmunt, David and Diane,

I think about your story. It is great. I wish that I could write about my teacher and me someday. I envy you because I wish that I could write like you. Someday I will.

Donald Gagnon

April 22, 1991

[Gary Birden wrote the following letter hoping to find a pen pal in England. He did! The pen pal's name is Stephen. His letter comes after Gary's.]

Hello,

My name is Gary K. Birden and I am 27 years old. I am 5'11" and my weight is 185 pounds. I like all sports except baseball. I am from Louisiana. I came to Hartford one year ago. I found out that they had a program called LVA. The LVA is a good program. Now I am writing and reading better than before. I am preparing to take the G.E.D. test now and judging from what I have worked on it is tricky. But knowing that it is a tricky test makes it easier to face. The G.E.D. test is another way of getting your high school diploma.

The United States is a beautiful place just like maybe you have heard. Also it can be a crazy place at times. I would like to visit England one day and I hope you can visit the United States.

Gary K. Birden

September 11, 1990

Dear Gary,

I am really pleased to have the pleasure of writing to you. I am Stephen March and I am 33 years old and I have been at Adult Education for 3 months now. I have a good time. I am married with 5 daughters and 2 sons and have 5 sisters and 2 brothers. I am a Christian.

I am unemployed. Liverpool is a great place but there is a lot of unemployed. I have problems trying to get work because of my reading and writing. I hope to improve it and get a city and guild in the English language. It would help me to get a job. You would be welcome to come to England.

I am an ex-boxer and love sports. I sparred with a guy who boxed Lennox L. I would love to go to America. You look like a boxer too. Sonny Liston. That's who!

Yours faithfully,

Stephen Marsh

Letter to England

Hi! My name is Marvin and I live in Rockville, Connecticut. I'm twenty six years old and about six feet tall.

I'm in the Literacy Volunteers writing clinic. I work for a landscaping company in Rockville. I'm second in charge in the Company.

I also work at Amerbelle Corp. That is a dye factory that dyes fabrics.

I have a son that is five years old. His name Marvin Jr.

We here in Connecticut wear LA Gears, Reebock sneakers and jeans pants. And any shirt will match the pants.

I play hackysack for a sport. That is a little ball that you kick around in the air with your feet. I'm not much into sports.

I go out into a place in Rockville where I can let out some energy. I would like to know more abut you guys in England and it is nice to write to you in England.

I can't think of any more to write now. Maybe, when I get your letter, I can tell you more.

Got to go now. Talk to you in the next letter.

Marvin

August 20, 1990

[Written by Marcie Lanteigne, LVA Tutor. As narrated by Fran, on January 30, 1991. This story and the next story are Language Experience Stories.]

I feel that I was left out and pushed aside in the school system. The reasons are that maybe I was not able to keep up. Also, I was in the "opportunity room" for somebody who couldn't keep up. This was in grammar school. In high school it was called "special education class".

In grammar school the "opportunity room" was always the same room with the same male teacher--year after year through 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. I felt I was not moving along. He, the teacher, didn't care if we talked or fooled around--games, laughed, or joked, whatever.

When I was in the 3rd and 4th grades, a woman teacher was very stern and strict. And, she was very helpful to me. She knew I hadn't developed. I remember her name because she took the time to teach me. Her name I remember well--Mrs. Dean. But, I blocked out the man teacher's name and can't remember it.

In high school, Mrs. Robinson, Mrs. Margel, and Mrs. Martin helped me a lot. Classes in high school were generally--if you get it you get it, if you don't you don't!

When it comes to numbers in math, I can do better with objects or money in front of me. I did not do good in long division. I know some multiplication tables, but I can get it by adding and subtracting. It takes longer. Multiplication I can do the long way.

I've come a long way, believe it or not. I didn't lay back--have babies and stay home. I liked to feel I had potential to learn more. On my own, I went out and did things--what people said I couldn't do. I came up fighting. I don't like being told I can't do anything. In the last few years, especially the last 3 years, I've come a long way.

continues on next page

I have become a Eucharist Minister--going to hospitals giving Communion plus giving hope. Knowing that someone looked up to me for hope and prayer, I was proud of myself. I was proud of myself being a Girl Scout Leader and getting handicapped parking by filling out applications on my own. I like (or I was proud) to have the knowledge of knowing where to go and what to do to get information.

When I go to hospitals, doctors, nurses, or hospital people cannot stop me from doing my duties as Eucharist minister. I wear a long gown and cross with a badge that has my name. I feel good that I can help somebody. I feel good when I have done this by myself. I feel like I'm on cloud nine and nobody can bring me down.

I'm upset, but at the same time I feel good that I have done these things to help others. These people give me energy. I feel high--like on drugs. I'm still hungry for more.

When I went down to fill out the application for Notary Public and the lawyer signed my paper, he didn't know how hard it was for me to come this far. He didn't even know with all his education what a struggle it was for me to come this far and where I am going.

Respects means a lot to me. I like people to look up to me--eye to eye, and not look down on me. If you look up at me, it's great. It's fantastic. I need that energy to keep going, to do something else. I'm looking to make myself more important. I'm looking to not be better than anyone else--but as good.

What gives me encouragement is when people in the hospital look up to me. It feeds me with energy to look for more. What else is there for me to do? This is not enough. I want more. You have given me encouragement. There are things I've done on my own. You have to be very alert on everything--notice things and question things.

[Narrated by Fran to Marcie Lanteigne on March 13, 1991.]

My son got four "A's" on his report card! I can't believe it! I put it on the "fridge." You know, we play games with him. I play games with his homework. His father plays word puzzles using a time limit. Who ever finishes first wins a coin. This molds his brain. They get interested and want to do this again and again.

I make homework interesting for him by surprising him with "something" in a bag. When he was younger, I used to put a crayon, a magic marker, pencil, some small thing in his bag and told him to finish his work before he could choose one.

I won't let him do homework till 6 or 7 o'clock--after a snack, so he will be relaxed. Studying he does at the table. If it's everyday homework, he spreads his papers all over the floor. You should see the den, everything is all over the floor. When he takes a break, he says, "Don't touch my papers!"

The teacher says he studies really hard. He doesn't talk in class. Sometimes he laughs, but doesn't fool around. He pays attention to the teacher.

I tell him to take his time. Sometimes he studies from 6 to 9. He plays cards and likes it. By adding points he's learning, that's the object. I play games with his homework and he likes that. He wants to be a teacher or a teacher's aide someday.

If I Won the Lotto

If I won the Lotto, I would like to pay all my bills, and I would like to pay my mortgage. I would like to open some business for my husband.

I would like to buy a new car for my brothers, my sister, my husband and me. I would like to fly to Columbia and pay all of the mortgages for my other brother, and I would give money to my nephews and nieces for college and buy new cars or apartments for them.

For my brother-in-law, I would like to pay off his mortgage and buy him a car. I would give some money to all the poor people and I would like to save money for my daughters' college. If I had money left, I would give money to schools or libraries. Some dreams might come true!

Elizabeth Ojeda, ESL student

If I Won the Lotto

If I won the Lotto, I would pay for my children's college education and I would send Robert and Michelle to Paris to study for the summer. Then I would give my kids money to buy a complete wardrobe. I would buy Robert and Michelle a new car so that they could get back and forth to school. I would have a house built and invest some of the money in real estate. I would give some of it to a charity organization.

One of my dreams is to go to Africa, so I would go to Africa for two months. Before I left I would buy a complete wardrobe. Once I returned, I wouldn't quit my job because I enjoy working. The chance that I could win the Lotto is one in a million.

Anonymous

April 30, 1990

Growing up with my family

When I was growing up with my family I had two sisters and one brother to cope with. My brother took care of us when mother left the house. He let us sit down and play with our dolls. Then he would go and cook our lunch and give it to us.

My sister and I were very close. We shared most of our things. She let me wear her clothes and play with her dolls, and also we played dollhouse together.

Sometimes it turned out into a fight and my mother would come and get us and send us to our rooms. When our mother left the room, I would slip into my sister's room and we become friends again.

My sister and I are still close. Her name is Claire Ross. She is younger than me. She is married and has three children and lives in Bloomfield. She is very smart and can talk a lot and also can make friends easily. She was a teacher in Jamaica.

I still see my sister every weekend, we talk on the phone every night. I tell her about my night class and we go to the same church every Sunday. My sister helps me with my important papers. We can talk about anything together.

Elaine S.

CHAPTER 4
VOICES AND OPINIONS

[These students spoke about the problem between a mother and her son, and the tutor wrote down what they said. Then the students read their own words. See appendix for actual prompts the students responded to on this page and the next.]

The Problem

The mother is yelling at the son because he doesn't listen to what she's saying. He's rude and disobeys her. The son is saying, give me a break. I don't like the way you're yelling at me. You're too strict!

How should this problem be solved?

Chris:

They should sit down and talk the whole thing out. If the mother starts yelling she should sing a song to calm herself down. The mother should let the son do what he thinks is right for him. The son should also do what his mother wants him to do sometimes. It's a two way street.

Don:

The son and the mother need more communication with each other. Also, they need to talk more with each other. When they get to know each other better, I don't think they'll have no more problem after that.

Cleotha:

The mother shouldn't yell at him until she has a talk with him. He will get to understand her better and things will iron out for him and her.

Walt:

If the family would sit down and explain to him, it would work out better than just the mother and son talking.

[These ideas are also spoken by students and written down by the tutor.]

What would you do?

The problem: The boy wants to play with dad. But dad is too tired.

Chris: The boy should wake up his father and say you promised to play with me.

Don: Let dad rest. He's too tired. Maybe after he rests, he will have time to play with me.

Walt: The boy is too afraid to wake up dad because dad might whip him. That's the way it is. Maybe dad will play with him later and maybe not.

Why it is Hard to Talk to Someone Who is Dying

Well, I think it's hard because we are afraid of dying. Some people most likely are upset at the person who is dying because that person is leaving them. People do not know where they go when they die so it can be hard. Some people just do not want to let go because they think if you stay away from the dying person it will not hurt as much, but I do not think that is true.

When someone you know is dying, I think the best thing to do is to talk to that person and see if you can do anything to help that person, by telling him or her how much you love and need and how you will miss them when they die. I think it is important to talk to the dying person. Let's face it, no one wants to die, and knowing that you are dying has to be horrifying.

Danny Concatelli

A Time To Seek

I think that the people who left the church are coming back because most of them have family and realize that children need a place where they can learn solid values. And I think more churches are realizing that they need more programs to keep the family of the 90's in church such as day care programs, programs for single parents, support programs and AIDS awareness programs.

Personally megachurches turn me off. The idea of rule no. 1 of the megachurch is that a church will never get bigger than its parking lot, as was said by the Rev. Gerald Mann, a pastor of a church in Texas that has 3,000 members. Personally I think this pastor is full of baloney. I feel that the purpose of going to church is to worship the Lord not to make money or to sponsor 64 softball teams, 48 basketball teams, 84 volleyball teams, and flag football, golf tournaments, bowling lanes, indoor jogging track, racquetball court, weight aerobics rooms and a music wing for its orchestra and 500 member choir.

The idea of megachurch is how I think people like Jim and Tammy Baker just take the faith out of church and make it a mockery. People like me just want a plain church with a good pastor and a good choir and a hour and a half service.

Herman Daley

January 1991

[This student has also written in Spanish for El Imparciale on topics such as child abuse and city life.]

Voices and Opinions

There is much interest when people talk about minority groups and their role in the North American society. On this occasion we will examine the Hispanic and African-American populations.

Recently we were reading the Census Bureau's report and its demographic prognosis for the year 2080. It says by that year Hispanic and African-American groups combined will represent 35% of the population and probably the white population will be in the minority.

With this data we began to talk with different people to find out their opinions about that prognosis and the political, social and economic consequences for those times.

We spoke with professionals, politicians, and non-professionals of the three groups. There were some people who did not want to think about the remote future of 2080. Other people gave conservative opinions appropriate for a stable society. And we call this a conservative view because all future statistics predict that the Hispanic and African-American population will continue in the current lowest level and the white population will go on controlling the political and economic structures of society. All this, despite the significant 35% who will represent more voters, a workforce superior to the present, and many cities where the governments will be led by the Hispanic and/or African-American communities.

By 2080 this country probably will be more divided and the social conflicts and discrimination will prevent too many people from achieving the "American Dream" that is not only material well-being, but is also cultural assimilation and integration into this country.

For the next edition, we are preparing an article in which each ethnic group will have the opportunity to express its viewpoint about this interesting topic.

Klever Garcia, July 9, 1990

I went down to Florida, Coco Beach, in 1959 or 1960 to join my husband at the Patrick Airforce Base. One day we went to Orlando to visit some friend of his. I seen a hamburger place. I went to get some hamburgers and a shake. When I approached the window to be served, the waitress was so nervous she got her boss to speak to me about the service. I told her I would like to have a hamburger and a shake. She was in a rage. She told me that I would have to go around to the back to get it. Like a fool I did, but to my surprise the black man gave me 2 cold hamburgers and a shake. I told him I didn't want that cold hamburger and why is it the colored people got to go in the back to get a meal. I was from the North. I didn't know anything about the South serving black people that way. I was so mad with my husband for that joke he pulled on me. I couldn't believe they could do black people like that down there in the South. Where I came from black and whites go to school together. We play and eat together.

What a difference from the North! I don't believe I could ever live there.

Dolores Branch

November 7, 1990

I don't think it's right that black and white people can't live together. It would make the world a lot better if all races can get along.

Then there would not be a lot of fighting. As a black male I am frustrated at real estate agents making decisions upon the race of their customers. No matter what color we are, we still have the same needs and wants.

Anonymous

January 14, 1991

[This letter was written by an advanced ESL student.]

To whom it may concern:

According to the experience of many people who have black neighbors, I found that black people are not dangerous as neighbors.

It doesn't matter what your neighbor's skin color is because you can have a white neighbor who might have a lifestyle that breaks with social rules.

Also we have to consider this: If I live in an expensive neighborhood, the people who live around me usually have the same level or status economically and intellectually speaking, so these people black or white are not dangerous.

Please think about this and you'll find it's true.

R. B.

January 14, 1991

My Perfect Candidate

I would like to see someone who is strong minded and who will not let anyone take advantage of his way of thinking. Take time to accept all the issues that is given to him or her. It does not matter, woman or man, as long as they speak up for what's best for their country.

I would like to see some of the tax money go in to helping people help themselves. Some people don't know about drug centers and alcohol centers. And money to teach families how to get started on buying a house. A lot of families don't know how to get credit. For example, there are people living in apartments all their lives.

M.

November 5, 1990

[The next four essays are responses to a story by Langston Hughes. There is a summary of the story in the appendix.]

About Langston Hughes' "Thank You Ma'am"

I would be so mad that I would chase him down the street for my pocketbook. I was so mad, I picked him up by the collar and told him, "Why you want to snatch my pocketbook? Don't you know you would go to jail?" I wouldn't bring him home with me because I don't know him. I don't know what he might do, but I would talk to him.

Pat Cook

July 23, 1990

Thank You Ma'am

What would I do? It's hard to say what I would do. Everyone will say what I will do but you never know. We deal with different stick ups. I think from my judgement I would have been very mad. And sometimes I get mad and sometimes I calm down and can have a level mind and sometimes not. But you try to give everyone the benefit of the doubt.

Anonymous

July 23, 1990

Thank You Ma'am

What I would have done if I was in the situation that the lady Mrs. Jones was in I can't really say. I can't really say because it depends what mood I was in. I think that Mrs. Jones was real nice to the boy. She was trying to help the boy get his life together to show him that somebody cares how his life ends up. I might have gave him a good spanking just to let him know that he is being a bad young man. I think the boy needed to be taught some respect for other people.

M. J.

July 23, 1990

Thank You Ma'am

The Last Time For Me

In the story, the woman stopped a young man from snatching her pocketbook. After awhile she took the young man home with her. She left the door open and the young man looked at her and at the open door. But the young man remained there at the lady's house. She found out that the young man was nice and a good man. She gave the young man a ten dollar bill to get his shoes that he wanted all along, before he wanted to steal her pocket book. The question was asked what would we do in the story if I were the person in the story. If a young man came to me and wanted to rob me, I would take him by the arm and try to talk to him about what he is doing. If I see he is not listening to me, I will give up on him and let him go. That will be the last time for me.

Derrick Matthews

July 23, 1990

Limits On Freedom Of Speech

There are lots of opinions that people have about freedom of speech. People know right from wrong but will disagree about limits on freedom of speech.

For example, if the KKK wanted to buy a billboard for an advertisement, I think that it should be censored. Other people would think that the KKK should have freedom of speech even if it's obnoxious. Another example is that the commercials advertising beer make beer seem like it makes you happy. But they don't show the after-effects of alcohol drinking. I think the beer seller should have their right to make the product look good just like any other advertiser.

If you notice, I had two different opinions on freedom of speech. The topic of the KKK is more important to me than the beer commercial. It really hits home because I'm a black American. I'm offended by any organization that stands for racial inequality. I don't think that the KKK should be able to spread racial views.

M. J., November 11,1990

Dear Ann Landers,

There are laws to protect abused women. Today I was watching television and a woman was killed. She reported her abuse and then she was killed. Just think if you put her up to coming forward. It can make you feel very bad. Things like that can make a lot of women afraid to tell, and make people afraid to help. Hard Copy ran a show that was about 911 not responding to a call. That call was from a lady who had a restraining order to protect her and her family. They got to have more protection than restraining laws. I think more women would come forward if they had more.

Gary K. Birden

March 29, 1990

Get Tough

Crime is a system by which some people express their feelings to other people by ways of inflicting wounds, killing, mugging, stealing, etc. World wide, year after year crime increases severely and the system of law enforcement for punishment stays the same. There should be more arrests, strong action, and more harsh punishment, when someone commits a crime like killing someone else. There should be a choice and if someone is found guilty, there should be a sentence of a length of time in jail or the electric chair. People who committed crimes should be judged and pay fines depending on their crime. Putting risk and heavy punishment on people would make them think twice before committing crimes. They should do it world wide. Not in one state, but in all. People are people. Some crimes are not reported to the police. They are kept silent, like most rape cases are not reported. The society has to help the police.

Carole F.,

October 25, 1990

The Justice System

The justice system in some areas is incorrect. It enables people or parents, for example, not to scold their children at home and school for various reasons. Take for instance, people who are convicted for murdering others, tried, fined and sentenced to serve in jail. Sometimes after a short period they are eligible for parole and sent back to the streets, maybe to create more chaos after someone's innocent life has been taken. Therefore, they too should be put to death. I do like the Justice System. I like the arrest and some of the punishment.

Carole F.

October 25, 1990

Remove Rape Criminals from Civilization

Rape is a serious crime. In America, the prison sentence for taking property is greater than the sentence for rape. It would seem that people's love for money and material things has become more important than their love for one another. I can't see a person taking a TV and getting a five year sentence, when another person who rapes a lady gets two years. You can replace a TV but the horror that a lady goes through will be there forever. I never talked with a lady who had been raped. I have five sisters and the thought of that happening hurts, so I can imagine how a rape victim's family and friends feel.

According to the criminal justice system in 1984, the average sentence for burglary was 148.6 months. In the same year, the average sentence for rape was 132.8 months, of which an average of 54.7 months was actually served. The criminal justice system thinks it can rehabilitate criminals. I wish it worked, but it does not.

Gary K. Birden

April 25, 1990

[Earnestine E. wrote this letter to the editor in response to an article in "News For You," an important source of readings for students. See "Tutor Talk", Chapter 9, for address.]

I think it's good female prisoners are making blankets with hoods on them for the homeless. Too bad someone can't make housing just for the homeless. I don't understand why the USA has a housing problem with all the money the USA has.

Most of the homeless people are sick. I know that comes from being homeless. I wish there was more low income housing. That way the people that can't afford to pay rent can go to low income housing. I feel housing is unfair to people with no money. In order to have a nice apartment in a good area, you have to have two jobs because the rent is so high.

April 25, 1990

The Supreme Court had made a decision against drunk drivers because of lots of accidents. And the decision they make up, it will change people's behavior. The Supreme Court is right because a lot of people are dying from accidents caused by drinking and driving. People are right about their privacy but something has to be done about it. Even if stopping for the police at checkpoints is a hassle when you are not drunk, in the long run it is better for everybody's safety.

John Milner

June 30, 1990

Angola and Me

In 1961 the bad news came in on radio and TV. The Black people from West and East Angola were fighting against each other. They killed White and Black people because those people did not join the Communist Party.

The Portuguese President, Salazar, told the army and all forces to go to Angola and stop the fighting. When the army reached Angola it was too late to stop their war.

In October 1969 I was called to go to Angola to fight the guerrillas. I went to the mountain with a company of the army. I camped there for about two years. I fought for peace and in 1971, I completed my turn of service in the army. I stayed for two more years around the beautiful province of Angola which I like so much and miss so much, because of the rich things and friendships I made.

In 1973, my father sent me papers for me to come to America. But I have a lot of memories and at that time I wanted to go back to live in Angola. Now I don't want to, because there is no more peace there.

J. Figueirdo

Spring 1990

There are many positive and negative effects as a result of cars in modern life. Here are some of the positive effects of cars:

1. It takes you where you would like to go such as going to the shopping mall. Sometimes if you don't have a car, as far as going to the mall is concerned, you just can't get there unless you do have a car.

2. It is good for going anywhere.

3. It's good when you are working far from the job and you have to walk a long way off. If you had a car, you could use it to work.

4. Having a car is good for the mother of the house who has to do a lot of outside things where she needs a car.

5. When you have a car you can just get up and go without waiting on others to take you here and there.

6. Having a car is good for business such as jobs, selling cars, and buying cars.

7. It's good for the needy: nursing, picking up people for shopping, and church.

As for the negative side of cars:

1. I had a nice car, my first car. Someone hit it and made things worse for me. As far as transportation, it was God's will that none of the people in the car was hurt.

2. It's hard sometimes to take the car to be cleaned. We like to drive but keeping the car in shape is the hardest thing to do.

3. After getting off from work, the traffic is a mad house, in and out of lanes, going to and from work, after a certain time of day.

4. For today's cars, they are not made up in body like they used to be 20 years ago.

5. Today a car costs a lot of money, insurance and taxes.

6. The negative thing about cars today is the accidents and deaths. The system is made up of cars today and they don't seem to go away.

Lorraine Tutler, December 6, 1990

I go to the North United Methodist Church on Albany Avenue. The pastor is Robert L. Martin. The people there are nice. I wish I could participate more. I don't read and write or mix very well.

Church is a place to worship the Lord. It is very uplifting. Sometimes we have guest speakers. I remember one in particular, the co-pastor of the Baptist Church on the corner of Albany Avenue and Vine Street. He brought the church to life. His message was "somebody ought to say something." The Christians who say nothing are just as guilty as the bad people, with their silence. Somebody ought to say something about the homeless. Somebody ought to say something about babies having babies.

R. M. D.

CHAPTER 5
READING, WRITING, LEARNING, TEACHING

A Student Prayer Has Been Answered

I am a student of the Literacy Volunteers in the Greater Hartford area. We have a lot of people with reading problems. The tutors in this program are trying to help.

We must stamp out this problem that this country has. We are a rich country but the people have poor literacy. We as Americans must overcome this disease called illiteracy.

I am not illiterate. I just want to improve on my reading capabilities to achieve my goal of becoming a deacon. If I can overcome this reading problem, you can overcome yours as well.

We must stamp out this illiteracy now! You and I are too smart to let a good thing die. We are talking about our minds. There are some good people in this world that care. I thank God for this program. It works for me. I have found it to be true that reading is the best policy, and that can be true for you. I have prayed that they would have a reading program like this.

Derrick Matthews

June 12, 1989

I want to learn better English because I want to have a conversation with them so they can understand me. It makes me happy. My friends are English speaking people and I feel embarrassed when they don't understand me. I work in my husband's store and have trouble understanding the salesman. Talking on the telephone is very hard for me. All these things are negative now; I want something positive. That's why I am here, to be better in the future.

M. O.

December 17, 1990

[Patrick Lizotte responded by letter to the following article by a Brooklyn, N.Y. student named Hector Diaz. This letter was spoken to a tutor and the tutor wrote it down. It is called a language experience essay or story. Article reprinted by permission from Voices magazine.]

To Past Teachers

Why didn't I learn after ten years of school? What is wrong with you people? Are you all crazy? You wasted my time for ten years. I came to school and I still don't know anything. But I know it wasn't my fault. I can learn how to read. The way you teach was very terrible, boring, and stupid. What do you want from me? Did you expect me to just start reading on my own? All you people ever did was to pass me from grade to grade because you did not care. Why don't you all go back to school and this time learn the right way to teach.

Patrick's Response

Dear Hector Diaz,

I read your article today. I read it at the American Literacy Volunteers center in Hartford. I came from a small town in New Brunswick, Canada. I know just how you feel. When I read your article, I felt the same way as you did. I got to third grade and asked my teacher to help me learn my syllables and she told me I should have learned them in 1st grade. She never showed me. Because I was poor, I was put aside in school. The only thing I learned in school was how to fight and defend myself from the principal's straps and rulers. Now I'm 43 years old and I'm just starting to read after only 6 months of school. Thank you for your article. We are learning to read with these small articles. Now, I know I can read, too.

[Student participation is an important aspect of the Reading Center. It is important that the tutors and the staff hear what the students have to say. Also, composing thoughts, feelings, and ideas into written forms makes a good lesson. Vurlean is a former student of Literacy Volunteers of Greater Hartford. She served as a Vista Volunteer, (Volunteers In Service To America) worker with this affiliate.]

I am Trapped.

I hate this place so much that I cannot cry because the tears refuse to come out. I want to get away so bad.

But I am trapped!

I feel like a mouse in a corner backed up against the wall and the only way out is to scratch my way out, but I do not have any claws or teeth to dig my way out.

So I am Trapped!

Sometimes it is like being locked up in a mental hospital and screaming, "Help, help, please let me out," but the only people that hear me are the doctors and nurses that locked me up.

So I am Trapped! If I could read I could get out. I could learn to read if I could get out. Please help me somebody, I cannot read. So I am trapped! I am trapped! I am trapped!

V., 1986

["I did not learn to read until I was 39 years old. Mrs. Dorothy Clark taught me how, so I am no longer trapped.]

Just Life

My Name is Laverne. This is my story. I want you to sit down and think about this story I'm going to tell you. Playing in the streets was a game but it was life for me. Some people wouldn't understand that. But first, I would like to ask you, "Do you know how it feels to live in the streets?" I'm trying to tell you something about myself, but I have not learned how to do that. But, I'm a thinker.

I want to tell you about a man I knew. His name was Joe. He was my first teacher. But, don't forget, I'm a thinker. Joe didn't teach me about the books. He was teaching me about life. He told me that I had to learn to read if I wanted something in life. I know that you can understand that.

In writing this, I don't want to sell you a dream, but I want you to know how good it feels to read a book and to understand it. It's like a first love.

Laverne F.

Dear Ann,

I was raised on a farm in North Carolina. I didn't go to school much. I had to work on the farm every day it didn't rain, so I didn't go to school much. So, I would like to read and write now. It looks like it is fun to read and write.

Andre E. King

[The following stories are written by C.D. She is a 32 year old high school graduate who came to LVGH in early September, 1989.]

My little niece read me a story about the gingerbread man and I was very proud of her. When can I be proud of myself?

I like the story about the gingerbread man.

September, 1989

The Crying Heart

Hear my heart crying for help. I don't know why. No, but maybe I do know why, and I just don't want to admit it to myself.

September, 1989

I remember when I was little my mother used to read to us. I don't know why I couldn't catch on like my sisters and brothers. I used to cry myself to sleep, and the day would start all over again.

October 14, 1989

Every day I tell kids, "You will need to learn how to read." Learning how to read is the most important thing in your life. I should know; I am one of those people who don't know how to read. That's why I am telling you now to learn how to read or you will regret it later.

February, 1990

[I had used the September newsletter for a lesson with my student. As a homework assignment, I asked her to write about what a reader could do that a non-reader could not do. The paragraphs below (phrasing and spelling are hers) were the result of this assignment.]

Lois Griswold, Tutor

Being able to read means a whole world opens up to a person. It is like the sun shining on you! It can mean a new career for you. People can understand what you are trying to say. Also you will be better able to communicate with the people you come into contact with. A person can see the world in a beautiful way because you can read and therefore understand better.

Being a non-reader means almost no future because a person does not understand what he or she is seeing or reading just like a blind person. A person not being able to read means sometimes no choice of jobs. You have to take what you can get. It' almost like a dead end.

Kim Walker, October 5, 1988

[This story was told to a tutor and the tutor wrote it down. It is a language experience story.]

One Sunday morning I saw "Learn How To Read" on Channel 36 and I called the telephone number they showed on the screen. They sent me a form telling me where I could get help. That's how I came to the Reading Center.

The main reason I want to read better is because my wife and I are expecting our first baby soon and I want to be the first one to read the baby a story. Another reason is that I want to improve myself and I don't want to cheat myself by not being able to read better.

I've lived all my life in Hartford and I finished high school here. The reason I don't read well is because I'm a slow learner. I drive a truck for a lumber company and deliver lumber all over Connecticut and sometimes to Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire and New York.

ANONYMOUS

Goals

My goals are to become a very good reader, and to get my G.E.D., and someday go to college. I want to be able to spell a word if asked and not hear my son say, "Mom, you didn't know how to spell that word and I do." I want to be able to help my son and daughter with their high school homework, when that time comes, and be able to say and read words without the help of others. My goal is to become a good reader so I can become a literacy teacher and to say that I, too, once couldn't read well, but I learned and so can you!

ANONYMOUS

I started school January 20, 1988. I could not read or write but now I can read and write. My family is so happy. It is very good to learn to read and write. It is very important for you to learn to read. I wish everyone who cannot read would go to school. You must be able to do for yourself, for no one will do anything for you today.

I always wanted to learn to read the Bible. Now I can read the Bible. I don't have to ask no one to read for me, so it is very good for you to learn to read for yourself.

It is not good for everyone to know what you do; so you see why you must learn to read and write. It is very important. I am just hoping that everyone can go to school. It is a must that you learn to read for yourself. You know, when you cannot do for yourself, it is not good. I will urge everyone to go to school.

ANONYMOUS

January 18, 1990

I have always had a problem in reading. I think I have dyslexia. I always spell things like words wrong the way they sound, all the time. I went to school like everyone else but because I did not know how to read, I did not like to read. I love the idea of reading because I go to the library to get a book to read. When I did not like to read, I would get tired fast. I even got a mega-memory. It is a program to help you remember. When I got to the last part I got tired and gave up. So I wanted to get back to school. Friends told me about this program. I don't think my problem is big, it can be adjusted some how.

E.P.

January 7, 1991

You Never Get Too Old To Learn

You have to want to learn. I always wanted to learn but never had a chance until I got older. If it's something you always wanted to do, you will do it when the opportunity comes. When I heard about Literacy Volunteers I knew it was my chance. I have worked very hard with my tutor. I have learned how to read better, write, and understand what I read. I wanted to learn how to sign my signature, and now I can do that. My tutor and I are very good friends. If you want to do something, take the opportunity. You only get out of it what you put into it.

Sarah Jefferson, 1990

My Class

I have been studying in ABE class almost a half year. I study English two nights a week; that's reading and writing. I have one night in math class; it is on Wednesday. In the English class I have learned the spelling words and the sound of each letter of the alphabet. Most of the time we have to study at home by ourselves; in the class the teacher only corrects our homework before she gives us a test. Sometimes we have to go to the blackboard and do a sentence. I like the math class; it is interesting, and the teacher is nice and very patient. Sometimes she tries everything to make us understand how to solve math problems. She explains very clearly, and I learn much more quickly and understand more.

Nu D. Tran
June 27,1990

Pedro's Dream

I came here to make my dream come true. I wanted to get a better job. To get a better job, I have to read English. I came here to make my dream come true. It was the very best way to learn English. It is very hard to come when I am tired. I can read more words. I can write better. I can say words clearly. Even when I am tired, I have learned.

Pedro P.

[Students wrote to Pedro to urge him to return to class.]

To Pedro P.

Pedro, you said that you had a dream. If you stop coming to class, the dream you have will not come true. Most of all, you have nothing to lose but everything to gain. You wanted a better job. To get a better job, you know that reading and writing are a must. I know, because I want a better job, and I know that without reading and writing, you cannot do it. Pedro, you said that you can read more words and write better, and can say words clearly. So don't stop there. Keep the dream going.

Gary K. Birden February 28, 1990

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Pedro,

We all get tired but look at it this way. If you sit at home you might get some rest. But how will you get a job you really want? Sooner or later you will go back to school but wouldn't it be easier to come back now? Take me, for instance, I quit school in the sixth grade because I was tired of going to school. So when I turned sixteen years old I got a job. I had good jobs but not the job I wanted. Ten years later I went back to school. It's hard and we all get tired but that's when I do better. No one said it was easy so do yourself a favor and come back to school. It will be the best thing for you and years from now you will thank yourself. So do it for yourself.

Sincerely,

Dan Concatelli

[This article was shortened for this book.]

A year ago I read an article in the Hartford Courant about Literacy Volunteers. At that point, I was interested in teaching as a career. I decided to tutor to get experience with such things as planning lessons. Once I began to come to the workshops, they not only taught me teaching skills, but also opened my eyes to illiteracy in the community. I grew up in a relatively well-off part of town and I attended excellent schools. I never took the time to wonder what it would be like in the shoes of someone who never went to a good school and never learned grammar, reading, and writing.

I soon realized that many people are not lucky, and therefore suffer prejudice. For example, because a trained mechanic can only speak broken English, he is looked down on. His boss takes advantage of him. Without being able to speak proper English, the mechanic cannot even bargain with his boss for a higher wage. Thus, he finds himself always earning that low wage.

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This is sad but the truth is that it happens right in our backyards. There is no reason for such a problem to continue. I often wonder why more people do not work in organizations like the L.V.A. Why not share the gift of reading and writing, of literacy, with someone who wants to learn? You can give them skills they need by working one-on-one. It's fun, it makes you feel good, and most important, it helps people who want to help themselves.

Sue Francis

Why are You Studying for Your G.E.D?

I am studying for my G.E.D. because I would like to become a police officer. I feel that it's important to finish school.

I did not finish school but I can get a G.E.D. You need to get a diploma to get a good job. When you tell some people you did not finish school, a lot of people think you are not so bright. But that is not true.

I will be the second one in my family to get a diploma and that's important to me. I do not know how I went this far or this long without a diploma.

When I get my G.E.D. I would like to tutor people who cannot read or write. That would be a great thing to do. I think it's real important to finish high school.

Danny Concatelli

[Dan received his G.E.D. in June, 1990.]

What Literacy Means to Me

Literacy is a means of achieving a new way of life. The ability to read, write, and understand what you are doing will help you not to shy away from anything and to deal with the situation at hand.

Literacy Volunteers is a place where I can go to give myself a push. I wanted to get into real estate, but couldn't read or write very well. Now that I am here things are looking up to achieve my goal, which is to get my real estate license.

When I was looking into getting my real estate license, I found out that you had to go to school, and that made me shy away. Now I feel a little better about myself because now I can read and write better and I'm not afraid of a challenge anymore.

Gary K. Birden

June 4, 1990

Student

One day I went to work. It was a new job. I was there for two weeks. So that day my boss called me into his office. I was not sure what he wanted. I went to the office. He told me to sit down. He gave me a piece of paper. He told me to write a note because I needed a name tag. I was scared. I did not know what to do. I did not know how to write. So I got up and said I had to go to the bathroom. I left his office and went into the bathroom. I was so mad at myself. I left the bathroom and went back to his office. He was not there. I took the paper to my office and wrote the note with my dictionary.

Thanks to my tutor Tom I can write this essay.

Danny Concatelli

How to become a better reader

Dear fellow student,

Almost everyone would like to become a better reader. A person generally knows if he or she reads well or poorly. But before anyone can improve their reading, they must have the desire to improve their reading.

To be a better reader, a person must read what they can understand. Some people read things that are too simple to challenge their effort. Others try to achieve better reading habits by reading things that are too difficult.

Almost anyone can improve their vocabulary. Vocabulary building continues throughout a person's lifetime. We can enlarge our vocabulary by reading a wide range of different types of materials, by listening to others speak, and by writing. Vocabulary growth is promoted by the study of word parts along with keeping a notebook of unfamiliar words to learn. Without a good vocabulary, comprehension and speed of reading are limited.

We can improve our reading by asking ourselves what we want to get out of it, and then try to achieve that goal to the end. Then make an outline and take notes of the areas needing improvements. An effective reader often reviews that outline immediately and goes over it later for better understanding.

I hope that this letter can improve your future goals to become a better reader.

Sincerely,

Chris L. Frazier

May 13, 1991

Thoughts on being a tutor

The time had finally come when our training sessions were over. It was time to meet our students. I must admit that I was worried. I asked myself if I was up to the task of teaching an adult to read. Where do I start? How should I approach a person who has spent his or her adult life not reading?

Eileen Durkin, the *[former]* Reading Center Director, introduced me to my student. We talked about the things that most people talk about when they first meet. I even began to realize that his fears were bigger than my fears. You have to be brave to admit that you cannot read. My self-doubts were overcome, but I think his were just beginning. The stereotype of the non-reader that I had in my head was quickly forgotten. My student is a bright man and eager to learn about history, travel, and so many other topics that are just beyond his reach because he is a poor reader. I left our first meeting with the feeling that I had been given a great responsibility.

In the weeks that followed, my student and I worked very hard during our two weekly sessions. Our one-hour session often became two-hour sessions. Progress often takes small steps. I have been gratified to see these small steps. The enthusiasm shown by my student has inspired me to extend my efforts on his behalf.

It is often said that we are rewarded when we give of ourselves to others. I have learned that there is a great deal of truth in these words.

John J. DeDominicis

Basic Reading Tutor-LVGH

My work with an ESL student

Edmond *(not his real name)* arrived in the U.S. from Poland twenty years ago when he was twenty-six. He had just married a young woman from his village. She had been living in the U.S. for over two years and had gone back to Poland to be married.

Within a week of arriving here Edmond found a job as an apprentice machinist. He still works in the same shop but by now has become an machinist and produces prototype parts with extreme precision for aircraft engines and the like.

All his co-workers are Polish and speak little or no English. Since his wife and the friends he meets socially are also Polish, Edmond has never had the opportunity to hear English spoken and has never had a need so speak it. Now that his three children are in high school and because it could help lead to promotion at work, he wants to learn English.

Edmond is very intelligent, ambitious and a hard worker. Although he never had training as a carpenter, he and a friend built his 8-room, split level house. He does his own automobile maintenance and repairs. He is well informed in U.S. and European history and current events, and has above average knowledge of geography, geology, physics, chemistry, astronomy, sociology and space explorations.

Edmond has been working with his ESL tutor for over a year now and together they think he has made some progress and plan to continue. His tutor says that if Joseph Conrad could learn English well enough to become a famous novelist then Edmond should do pretty well, too.

Jim Dickison

August 9, 1989

[This article was shortened for this book.]

CHAPTER 6

WE WORSHIP, WE CELEBRATE

Chinese Dinner

[This is a language experience story.]

The day before we celebrate New Year we have a big dinner for the whole family. My husband's mother and father would come to my house for dinner. We have a big dinner of baked chicken, baked duck, pork, beef, fish, shrimp, scallops put together in a soup, all kinds of vegetables and rice. We use chopsticks and a big spoon for the soup.

The next day we have only vegetables and rice. We do not eat meat, chicken or fish that day. We drink tea that we make with hot water and tea leaves. The grown ups in the family put lucky money in a red bag for the children. This money is put in the bank for the children or they can spend it.

Oi Yuk Chow

January 1990

[Sarah Jefferson writes the following about herself: I was ordained from Springfield Bible Seminary the 26th day of February 1987. Rev. D. R. Judge Lee D. D., Rev. Dr. Swell D. D. I have been a primary church school teacher 29 years at Mt. Calvary Baptist Church. This is the new address: 2 Oates Ave. Hartford, Ct. 06120. I was also a student at 55 Elizabeth Street, Hartford Seminary, in the spring of 1974.

I was licensed to preach the gospel. First, I was called by God. The second time was September 14th, 1972 and I was licensed at Mt. Calvary Baptist Church, February 23, 1975. Pastor Rev. F. D. Oates, Mrs. Anna Daniel, Church Clerk.]

Micaiah Speaks the Truth

King Ahab of Israel called all of his prophets to ask them whether or not he should go to war and whether or not he would win. All the prophets advised the king to go to war and they told him that he would win.

The king sent his officers to get Micaiah, the last remaining prophet. Micaiah told the king that God would give him the victory but that the army of Israel would be scattered over the hills like sheep without a shepherd, and the men would not have a leader. "Let them go home in peace."

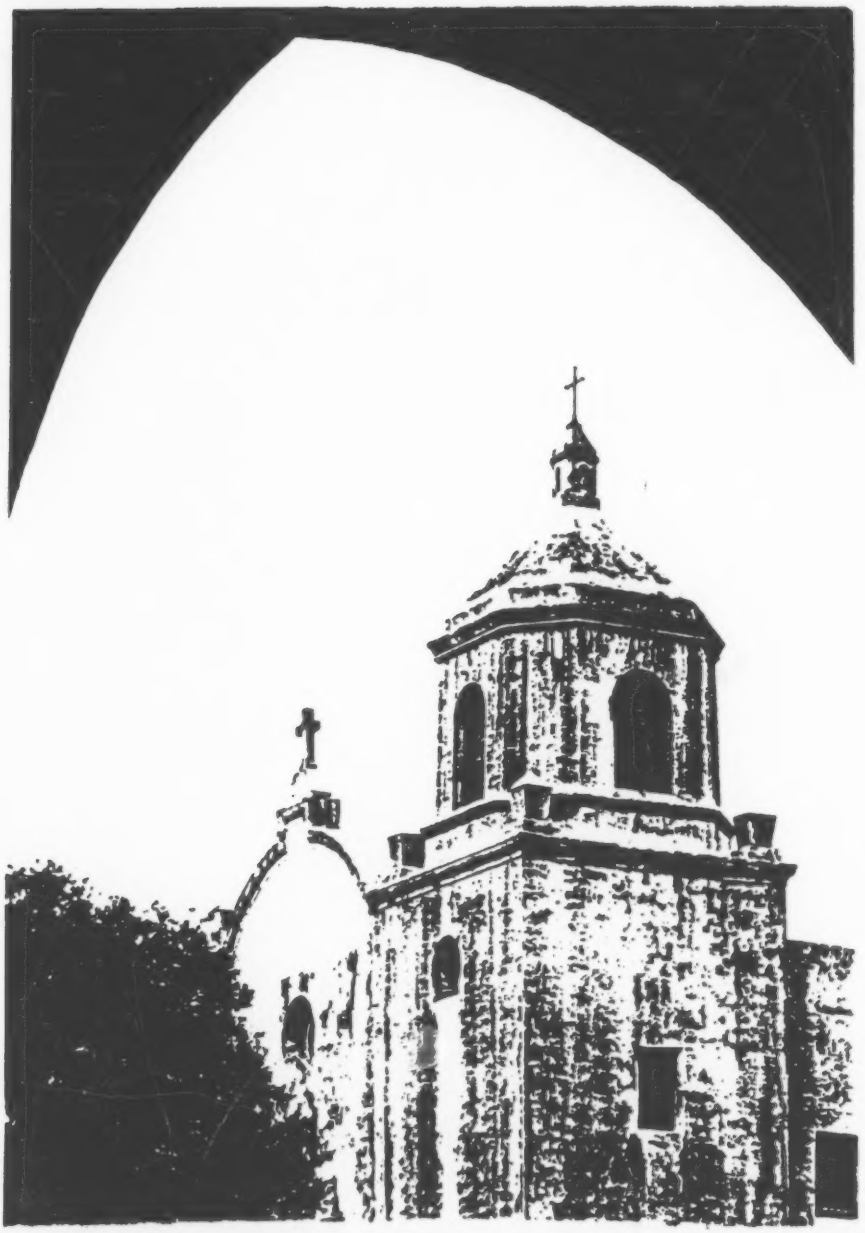
King Ahab knew that this meant he would be killed if he went to war. All of the other prophets said what the king wanted to hear. King Ahab had Micaiah arrested because only Micaiah spoke the truth. Micaiah said, "As the Lord lives, what the Lord says to me, that I will speak." (I Kings, 22: 13-17, 26-28, 14)

Sarah Jefferson, Oct. 9, 1990

A church is a place for fellowship and music and doing the good thing in life and learning about the Bible and praising God and letting Him help you and your family.

ANONYMOUS

June 18, 1990



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Elijah Warned King Ahab (I Kings, 21:1-7, 17-19)

Ahab was now king in Israel. Near King Ahab's palace was a vineyard that belonged to a man named Naboth. King Ahab wanted the vineyard for himself and, when he could not talk Naboth into selling it to him, he was very sad.

Jezebal, Ahab's wife, reminded him that he was the king. She felt that the king should have anything he wanted. Jezebel caused Naboth to be falsely accused and stoned to death.

As soon as King Ahab received the news of Naboth's death, he rushed to claim the vineyard.

Elijah the prophet was sent by God to King Ahab to tell him that he would be punished for the wrong done to Naboth.

Sarah Jefferson

Jesus

Jesus-Jesus

I was weak and he made me strong

I was hungry and he gave me food to eat, oh-oh-Jesus

I didn't have clothes to wear

He put clothes on my back, oh-yes-he-did-Jesus

That is why I love him so, oh-oh-Jesus,

I can't do without him, oh-oh-Jesus,

Listen to me! How can we be so cold?

Jesus died for you and I to save our precious soul

That is why I love him so, oh-oh-Jesus,

He has been good to me, more than I have been to myself, oh-oh-Jesus,

He has been my friend, oh-oh-Jesus,

He pick me up and turn me around, put my feet on solid ground, oh-oh-Jesus,

Can you see what he has done for me, oh-oh-Jesus?

Jesus-Jesus

I need him, I love him, I want him be with him, oh-oh-Jesus,

I want to be by his side, oh-oh-Jesus,

Please take my hand and lead me up to that promise land, oh-oh-Jesus,

Jesus don't leave me, please let me be by your side, oh-oh-Jesus,

I need you, I love you, I want you to be with you oh-Jesus-Jesus-Jesus.

Song written by Derrick Matthews

August 6, 1990

Between Christmas and New Year, we celebrate the day of the Innocents. This day reminds us of the "Massacre of the Innocents."

The Bible tells us that when the three kings were looking for Jesus, they stopped at Herod's palace. He became jealous of Jesus, and asked them to let him know where Jesus was so he too could go to pay respects to him. But in a dream, an angel told the three kings not to go back to Herod's. Herod got mad and ordered his men to kill all the children under two years of age.

This is a day when people try to trick each other. For example, you may get a call telling you that you won a prize, and then you are laughed at if you believe it.

Even the newspapers will print a false story on the first page and tell you it is a lie on another page of paper. It is similar to your April Fool's day.

The next celebration is December 31st. This is the day when we say goodbye to the old year and we welcome the new one and wish each other good fortune for the New Year. After midnight we eat and dance. People get very sentimental and usually cry.

The next Holiday is the 6th of January when we celebrate the arrival of the three Wise men or the Three Kings who bring presents to children. Some people have parties to celebrate.

This holiday marks the end of the Christmas season.

Claudia Arranga

January 1991

CHAPTER 7

PARTNERSHIPS

Some students in the Literacy Volunteers of Greater Hartford Program have long-term relationships with their tutors which have yielded quite a lot of writing. In this Chapter, you will be able to read the writing that has come out of those partnerships.

A Collection of Stories

By Dewey Brown

Written from May 1990 through April 1991

Part I -- Proud to Be a Nurse's Aide

Part II -- Looking back on my Early Life

Conclusion -- My Short Term Goals

Proud to Be a Nurse's Aide

. . . . . The other day a friend asked me what I did for a living. I said I am a male nurse's aide in the hospital and nursing home. This person made a face and said, "Oh Lord, I would not do that job for all the money in the world."

A lot of people think it is an awful job. Well believe it or not, there is something special about this job. People depend on me. I not only care for them, I care about them. You see I like what I do.

My work is the kind that many sons and daughters can't or won't do. Somebody has to take care of the sick and the old.

It takes a special person to do the work I do, and we are special people. I am proud of my work and proud that I care.

Caring for Frank

I work as a nurse's aide at St. Francis Hospital on floor 7-2. I also do private duty nursing in people's homes. We were told not to get attached to our patients, but I did.

I have been taking care of this patient named Frank. I knew Frank before I began taking care of him in his home.

He was a patient on 7-2. For almost three weeks or more, we became kind of close, not like nurse's aide to patient, but like meeting a new friend.

But after the third week, Frank was moved to 7-1 where he was until a few weeks ago. I lost contact with him. I did not know that the person I would be taking care of the next month at his home would be my friend Frank.

I am glad I got the chance to take care of my friend in his last days, because my friend is dying of cancer. All he does is sleep now. The doctor said there are only a few days left and I am very happy to take care of Frank again.

The family is so nice to him. Frank is a very lucky person, who is well liked by everyone in his neighborhood. My friend passed away last night June 19, 1990.

This is a story about Thomas Mitchell

I have been taking care of Mr. Mitchell for 2 years now. I have to say he is a very nice man. He lives with his niece. He's 84 years old. When I get there, he is always looking to see my little white car. When I first get in his home, he always says "Get your coffee, Dewey."

Sometimes when I get there, he has all his clothes on. He sometimes forgets that he did not have a bath yet. When I see that, I begin to laugh and then he would say "Oh, I didn't have a bath yet, I forgot." We laugh some more.

This is a story about Dr. Winters

When I began taking care of Dr. Winters back in October of 1990, he could not do anything for himself. He could not talk that well. He could not feed himself. He could not walk at all.

We began doing sit-ups and other exercises with arms, legs, and other muscles. He has come a long way. His lungs have gotten much better. His memory has gotten better too. We talk about the time he worked at St. Francis. He can remember people he did surgery on and the year he did it. It is enjoyable to take care of him.

Monday, the 14th of January 1991, we walked out of his room together. The nurses and aides could not believe their eyes when they saw him walking. Everyone was so glad to see him walk alone. He walked about 50 feet or more. Day by day, he's getting better and better. He surprised me, too. He said that he wanted to feed himself and he did. Now that really made me happy to see him eat alone. All in all, I guess my work is rewarding to see that happen.

This is a story about my job at St. Francis

I usually get to work around 11:00 pm. I fix coffee first, do our floor sheets second, and then stock up our first round cart. The time is then about 12:15. We begin our first round taking blood pressure, pulse, respiration and seeing that our people are dry and comfortable. That takes about 20 minutes per room.

After the rooms are done, we usually give the patients that are awake something to drink. Most of the time they like to have fruit juice, but sometimes they want coffee or tea.

Our main thing is to care and to talk to our patients about the following day and try to keep them from getting nervous about whether they will be able to walk again. It is the helpful words that help them most.

This is a continuation of my job

Every night is about the same. Sometimes we have more people to take care of than other times. If our floor is full, that is if all 33 beds are full, it is very hard even for two nurse's aides and two nurses. But, if we have three nurses, that is two RN's and one LPN, the night goes by very well. Most of the time we are not that lucky.

This is a new part to my job

Last week we started getting incoming patients from Mount Sinai. Some of the people are ortho patients, those are the ones with broken bones, but we do get others like asthmatic patients. Now we are getting the patients used for teaching medicine on our floor. It is not that bad to have to deal with the teaching medicine patients for the aides, but it is hard for the nurses to go from ortho to teaching medicine care.

The nurses on 7-2 do it and they do it well. Sometimes the floor is so bad. I wish I could do more to help them with their work. It is like wearing two different faces, going from ortho to teaching medicine and back to orthopedics. Our nurses do a good job of making the change. It is something when you have two different types of people in the same room and you have to give different types of care to each.

It's 5:20 am and time to begin our last rounds. Am I tired? Yes!

Floor 7-2 gets an A

I have to give 7-2 an A, because we have three new nurses on our floor. They are on second shift. The way I hear it, they are doing a very good job with the patients they have to deal with, because 7-2 is not a floor you can get to know in a few weeks. I also hear they are doing the changeover very well. Now, if we can get one more nurse's aide on my shift, we would be on the ball. We have two new nurse's assistants in the hospital. I know they won't come on our floor, because most aides don't like working up there.

Dear Dewey,

I think you are a very strong person because you know how to be a friend and not just a worker. You are a very special friend and the world needs more people like you.

From a friend,

Nolan Strong

Dear Nolan,

I want to thank you for writing to me. Nolan, I would like to be a special friend. Sometimes I think I work too much, but I like what I do. Oh, by the way, I am a nurse's aide at Saint Francis Hospital, and I really enjoy taking care of people. Sometimes it can get you down, but I know those people need someone who cares and that's what I am there for.

Enough about me, please tell me something about yourself. Are you a student in the literacy program? How is your teacher? My teacher and I are very good together. She is the type of person that puts things in a way that makes you want to learn.

Your friend,

Dewey

TO THE EDITOR OF SAINT FRANCIS HOSPITAL NEWSPAPER

I am one of the many nurse's aides that feel that we don't get the recognition we should because there's never anything said about the nurse's aides. All we hear is what a great job the nurses are doing. The nurses are not given enough time to care for the patients, and the aides must do that job. The nurses go into the patient's rooms to give meds and then they are gone. The nurse's aides are in and out of the rooms all the time. We listen to their personal problems and we try to reassure them that everything will be alright, and they will be getting well soon.

No one ever tells about how the patients talk to us, and why? Some people may think that all the nurses aides are there for is to give bed pans, and not for the care we give.

You can ask any assistant something about the patient's personal life and the nurse's assistant will know something about his or her family. We listen to all of these things, but there is never a word or anything written or said about what a good job the nurse's assistant is doing.

To me the nurse's aides are the back bone of the hospital, because we listen and care. Why can't we look in the paper and see some good things about the nurse's assistant?

By DTB

July 15, 1991

Part II

Looking Back On My Early Life

I am sitting here thinking about my life. I am 45 now and I am trying to learn how to read. It seems sometimes I feel so good now that I am learning to read again. Sometimes, I feel I am doing really good, then I feel bad because it looks like I am doing bad. I guess some days I am tired, but I think I am reading better than I was in May of this year.

My Joyous Christmas, 1990

It was not as joyous as I thought it was going to be. I didn't have time to get all the gifts I would have liked to have gotten for others. All in all, it was not so bad. What made me very happy was to hear that my mother was having a good Christmas with my uncle and aunt.

I worked from 7:00 am to 3:00 pm, Christmas day. If I could have been in Georgia with my mother, that would have been a joyous Christmas for me.

I got almost everything I wanted. I got a blood pressure cuff that takes the BP and pulse at the same time and I got new clothes, but that still didn't cheer me up.

Next year I hope to be home for Christmas.

This is a story about me

I was born May 20, 1945 in a small town in southwest Georgia called Camillo. I was born outside of town on my grandfather's farm. I don't know how long we lived there. I know we moved from there in 1950, because I can remember some things. It seems like I can remember the horse and cows. I also remember the little school my mother went to.

Every Mother's day and father's day, my mother and grandmother would take all the children to clean off all our family graves. I remember going to church every Sunday. But what I remember most about living in Camillo was the Sunday my mother joined the church. She was baptized in our spring water pool.

She was so happy. My grandmother was crying. My aunts were crying. It seemed like the church was so happy when a lot of young people joined the church.

I guess times were good and bad, but what I remember are the good times with my family. Also, I think my mother and father and our grandparents kept all the bad things away from us.

This is a story about Uncle Buddy's spirit

Sometimes at night when our parents were sitting on the porch and we would be playing outside, we could hear our aunts talking about some of our people who died on the farm years ago. One story I remember well. My great Uncle Buddy loved to drink, even after he died.

My aunt would joke about the times they had to come by my great Uncle Buddy's house, Saturday evening. After they had been to town in the wagon, they would get to Uncle Buddy's house and his spirit would stop the mules and would not let them move. My grandfather would say it's nobody but old Buddy, who just wants a drink. My grandfather would get off the wagon, pour some whiskey on the ground, and tell Uncle Buddy to turn the mules loose. And, he would and they'd go on home. They say it is the truth to this day.

This is a story about our first television

I can remember moving to Thomasville in 1950. There were three of us, my older brother Willie, my younger sister Freddie Mae, and myself, Dewey Brown. My mother was good with us.

I remember we were the first black family to have a TV set. I also remember that all the people in the neighborhood would bring their kids with them to watch television. Sometimes there would be so many people in our house, you couldn't get in there. The fun part was playing with other kids.

The first white family to have a television was Mrs. Smith's. In the evening, the same thing would be going on there as in our house. Everyone knew each other, black and white.

Mrs. Smith was our milk lady. That's who everyone in town got milk from. She was the first person my mother worked for. So, these two families in Thomasville were the first two to have television in town.

When I began school

I remember the first day of school. My mother got us up about 7:00 am on a Monday morning. She got our new school clothes out and got me ready for school. My brother wanted to go, but I didn't. I think that was the longest morning I ever had to get dressed.

We had friends going to Susy H. Dunlap School too, but I still didn't want to go. But when I saw my Uncle William, I knew it was going to be a good day. I knew we had the same teacher. Her name was Mrs. Moore and her grandson was a good friend of ours. I thought we were going to get away with not doing our homework. Well, we didn't. She was hard on all of us, even on the first day.

Going Into Ninth Grade

Going into ninth grade at Douglas High School was not so bad, because all of us who came from Susy H. Dunlap were friends.

Our house was the stop off place where everyone would stop to meet each other. This is where the boys would stop and wait for the ones that lived farther down the road. This is where the girls would stop to wait for the other girls, too. Most of the time, the boys would walk with the boys and the girls would walk with the girls. Me and the other guys would talk about who they wanted for their girl friends. Now that we were going to high school, we had to have girl friends.

We knew we had to do something or be something special. So the seven of us went out for football and made the first team defense. The same seven sang as a group. We did almost everything together. Where you saw one, the other six were not far away. We went to the movies together. We went to dances together. We also remained friends to this day, December 3, 1990.

My Teenage Days in School

As a teenager, I was a very happy guy and growing up in Georgia was the most wonderful time I have ever had. I wish the kids today could feel the memories I have for the 50's and 60's, because things were not so fast then.

Like on Friday night, you would go by your girl friend's house and you all would walk to a game. After the game, we usually had a dance in the gym. That's when you got to meet kids from the other schools and see which school had the best dancers. In our school, Wilbert Davis from my side of town was the best. Then, Johnny Harris also from my side of town was second best. Now, this guy was good. Then, there was Jack Cold. He was good too. He was from the other side of town called Dewey City. And then, when it came to me, I was very good too. We really had good times in our teen years.

Our 11th Grade Prom

The theme of our prom was a night in Rome. All year long, we worked to make money for our prom. On Saturday, we washed cars, cooked fish and had dances at JB's Club. My mother and grandmother did a lot of cooking to help us get the money we needed.

All of us gave a dollar a week from the time we got into 9th grade up to prom time. We didn't have any trouble raising the money. After football games, sometimes our class would sponsor a dance in the gym.

During the year of 1964, we began planning our prom, a night in Rome. For one week, we began decorating the gym by day and into the nights. There was a lot of work to be done. The 1964 class prom was the best Douglas High had had in years.

We had some of the 10th grade's best dancers to do a Roman dance during our dinner. We had light blue paper from one end of the gym to the other end like a real sky and we had stars hanging with a big full moon. It looked so much like the real thing. When you walked in, you couldn't believe your eyes. It was like walking into a Chinese garden. You walked across a little bridge into the garden with all types of flowers. In the center was a pool with one of the Roman gods in it and water spurting out in the air.

All the boys wore tux and the girls wore long dresses. The girl I took to the prom was Alma Read. She wore a yellow short dress with a yellow bow in her hair. I have to say we did look good together.

The Day I Met Ollie

It was during the summer, June 1962, that I met Ollie Mae Jackson. If I remember, it was on a Monday morning. We met in Quincy, Florida.

When I first saw Ollie, I knew I was in love with her and I knew she was falling in love with me. Whenever I saw her, I would get weak in the knees. She was the prettiest girl out there. We had a lot of good times in the fields together, growing closer as the days and months went by. Almost every Sunday, I went to Cairo to see her.

Oh, there were the Fables brothers, who also had met two sisters in the fields and I would ride to Cairo with them. They also married the girls they were going with and are still together. We were young, but God gave us the girls he wanted us to have.

There is one thing I would do, if I had the chance to marry her again. The years we are together have not been all that bad, but if I could do it all again I would make life easier and better for her.

This is a story about Willie Brown, my brother

I think it was in the early 60's. I don't remember exactly when, but I do know it was on a Friday evening. My brother was coming home from work. We had a 1957 Chevrolet that our mother had helped him get.

He usually stopped and had a drink, but this Friday he didn't. On Fridays or Saturdays, people in the South usually cleaned their yards. They raked their yards and burned trash in their yards or in front of their house. Sometimes, kids would play in the streets. On this Friday, there was a baby in the street when my brother was driving home.

He said he knew he hit something, but he didn't know what, because the road was so smokey. He didn't know he had just run over a three-year-old baby. That really hurt him. He parked his car for more than two years.

When my mother and brother would go to work, I would pull the car up in the driveway and back it up. I was doing that for months before anyone found out about my moving the car. The way they found out about it was that when I took the car out of the yard for the first time, I couldn't get it back into the yard.

So, I had to leave it on the street until they got home. First, I thought my mother was going to kill me, but when I saw my brother coming home I said to myself, you're dead now. They were mad at me at the time. Most of all, they were glad I was not hurt and didn't wreck the car. So, my brother said since you want to drive, I'll teach you. That was the beginning of my driving and a new beginning for my brother, too.

Conclusion

My Short Term Goals

First, I would like to be able to read better. I like reading in general, because reading will help me with the goals I am trying to reach.

I think my writing and spelling have gotten somewhat better since I began in May.

In September of 1988, my wife and I bought a home in Fort Myers, Fla. This was a goal to have our own home. I will be moving to Florida sometime in the next two years. When I get to Florida, I have a job at Kimberly Care waiting for me. I will also be working as a nurse's aide in private homes.

I am planning on continuing with my reading lessons. I was looking forward to the move, but now I am not, because I don't want to change teachers before I have learned to read well.

My long term goal is to become an RN.

Gail and Dewey

By Dewey Brown, Student

It was a few months ago when I was feeling down and I did not want to write anything because I couldn't spell a lot of the words I wanted to use.

Gail pushed and pushed to get me to write something, but I couldn't get back into writing. The way she got me back into writing, she would write me to tell me how much she liked my writing and the stories I write about. She'd tell me I had to write her back.

Once she wrote telling about how much she enjoyed tutoring me. I am so glad I have her for a teacher, because she gives that little push that people like myself need.

My Partnership with Dewey Brown

by Gail Michelson, Tutor

When I began tutoring Dewey Brown in May 1990, I wanted to include writing in my lesson plans to help uncover his reading problems. For a month, he wrote a short story each week about his job as a nurse's aide or his childhood in Georgia. I was very impressed with his style of writing about his personal feelings, but Dewey was discouraged by his spelling errors. After his first effort as an author, he wrote nothing for four months. I have called this time the period of his writer's block.

At a workshop for tutors, I was given an article about a dialogue journal. The article presented the journal as a notebook in which the tutor and student enter responses to each other's writing. After I wrote the first entry in our journal, Dewey felt that reading it was like getting a personal letter. In turn, he began writing again to get replies from me. Dewey's journal entries were written in pencil so that both of us could read his stories and make changes until we were happy with the results.

To give Dewey a feeling of accomplishment, I arranged his collection of stories in a book by topic. In preparing this book, there was some editing done to his first stories. The chapters written later contain only those changes that we worked on together. Now, adding new chapters to the book has become an ongoing activity.

While tutoring Dewey, I have learned just as much from him as I have taught him. Dewey has agreed to share his stories with other new writers and tutors with the hope that his work will motivate others.

SECTION 2

Introducing Derrick Matthews (by George Demetrion, Manager of the Bob Steele Reading Center in Hartford, CT)

Derrick Matthews has taken part in our program since March 1989. He has made a great deal of progress and has given back to our program in many ways. He knew what he wanted when he began his work with us, and he mastered basic reading and writing some time ago. What Derrick had not expected was that the world of learning would open up for him in all kinds of wonderful ways. The topics Derrick has chosen to write about reflect this opening up. He has written about the problem of illiteracy, our program, experiences at the LVA national conference, and other topics. He has written autobiographical essays and letters to other literacy learners.

Derrick, however, not only learns through practicing reading and writing but also through other experiences. He serves on the Board of Directors of Literacy Volunteers of Greater Hartford. He has become a leader in our student-tutor support group and he is an innovative peer-tutor. He represents us at training workshops and around the community. He is a founding member of the North End Literacy Committee which works in Hartford's Black community. He has managed the Reading Center while I have been on vacation and is my good friend.

Derrick is a true adult learner; his learning comes out of his life's concerns. When Derrick starts writing projects, he has two things going for him right from the start: desire and a reason for writing. Picking the right topics gives Derrick the will to keep going with his writing. He often produces three drafts. He is discovering not only his ability to correct his own spelling, punctuation, and grammar but also the fact that each draft offers the chance to say something new.

Derrick has contributed so much to our program. In addition, he is a greatly improved reader and writer.

My Start at the LVA and Work

Twenty months ago, I found out that I had a reading problem. It was on a Wednesday night at the Hopewell Baptist Church in Hartford. I had struggled to read a few verses when the minister called on me to read the Bible. During the second round of readings, the pastor skipped me.

I was disturbed by that! I decided to face up to my reading problem and to do something about it.

I had talked to JoAnn Johnson about my reading problem and she said to call LVA. I called the Literacy Volunteers. I talked to George Demetrion about my reading and writing problems.

George got a tutor for me. Her name is Dot Jacobson. She worked with me every Wednesday night, from 6 pm to 8 pm.

Dot worked with me for about sixteen months. The first 8 months for two hours a week. The last 8 months I worked on my reading and writing and spelling, reading newspapers, magazines, road maps and Bible reading. Eight months later, I improved on my reading and writing up to an eighth grade reading level.

Learning all of that in a short time I wanted to learn more. I got involved with the students, talking to them about how to make their learning better. I told the tutors how they can better improve on teaching the students by using a tape recorder.

I love to read and write. I love to help other students and help the tutor if a tutor cannot make it to the reading center. I pitch in and help the student with his reading and writing.

With my love for the Literacy Volunteers, I have gotten involved in becoming a student on the Board of Directors of LVGH and as a student advocate. I am now working with the North End Committee LVA. I speak at different churches in Hartford about LVA and at the schools also.

Working on My Dreams

It was a rainy night years ago. I was looking at the walls in my house. At that time I was not doing anything. I had an instant thought about learning how to read better. But my mind was not in tune with the thoughts I had come up with to solve my problem.

As the night air became cold and filled my room, my mind was wrestling with bad thoughts. Despite that, I was faced with the problem of not coming up with an idea to help myself with my reading problem.

My body grew tired and my mind became painful from too much thinking. My mind became more and more engulfed with thoughts that I could not explain or could not understand.

I know you are thinking that I was losing my mind; I was thinking the same thing. I was trying to put myself together in one piece.

The next thing I knew I had put myself to sleep. As I was sleeping, I was reading a book in my dream. I was reading like I did not have a reading problem. I was reading so well and so good. I read it from beginning to end without any problem at all.

I had awakened from my dreaming. I realized that the dream that I had was not complete and I must do something about it. I had given a lot of thought about my reading problem, then something came to me. If I read more and study my words harder, my reading skills will increase.

My thoughts sounded solid and clear about what I should do. I put my mind, body and soul in my reading and writing. As the days and nights have gone by, I have experienced constant improvement. I felt so good about working hard and long to better myself in reading and writing.

Afterward, the winds had died down and the trees had stopped moving from side to side; I had not lost even one thought about what I wanted to do about my reading.

My mind was clear and my body was strong with all of that with me. I was ready to do the very thing I had dreamed about which was to read anything without any mistakes.

People Make Me High

When I am around people, they make me feel high. I like to talk to the people and listen to them and what they have to say. Being with a group of people makes me feel good. I like to give them advice and give them a sense of self-esteem. The time I have been with the LVA, I've liked to help as many people as much as I can. I will do and say anything to help anyone as much as I can, because the people in the LVA have helped me, so, in return, I like to give to other people what I have. Being a member at the Hopewell Church has helped me to give myself to other people as far as helping them. Trying to be Christ-like in a Christian way, I have learned to help people.

July 31, 1990

The Lone Ranger

I feel like I am the Lone Ranger. Sitting alone without a care and without a home. No one to see, no one to talk to, not using my time. I feel I am losing my mind. Days and nights have gone by so fast, I do not need my mind to help me to remember how lonely I am. It pains me to think of the loneliness I feel inside. But the pain from my heart has reached up to my brain.

The loneliness that I face. Will it be an act of modesty to end my life? Oh! I feel this bad heavy loneliness on my soul. I ask God to help and to keep me whole.

I need to bust loose from this shell I am in. To fight back as hard as I can; to win, or to go to hell! Losing that thought of being alone, to find a new person inside of myself that I will grow into knowing. I will know who I want to be. Not the Lone Ranger any more. But a grown-up man, who has found his way back as an active person and a positive person as well.

I Like The Word Love

I like the word love because it is just like the word Art. It can cover everything in the world. I love people because I am a person. So I love myself. I love Jesus because he made me and he died for me too. I love animals because of the different things they can do and we can learn from them. I love people in the way that they express themselves in talking, walking, love making and other ways that they can express their feelings. That is why I like the word love.

August 13, 1990

Derrick Got Hooked

Many, many years ago, I was so little and small in size, being a little boy at heart. My father and my brothers went fishing on a summer morning. The sky was so clear and clean, my father took us to a nice clean lake outside of Hartford, Connecticut. In the year 1959, my mother made us sandwiches and had fruit for us too. My father bought us fishing poles, too. The three of us put our poles in the water at the same time. We waited for hours for a bite but nothing happened. So I waited even longer but nothing happened. As I was about to give up I got a bite, and then the line started to jump and weave in the water. It got bigger and bigger. My father said reel the line in. As I pulled up on the line, the harder it became for me to hold on to the fishing pole. You will never believe what happened. That fishing pole and line got hard for me to pull in. That fish had pulled me into the water and my father needed the fishing pole to pull me out. That's how Derrick got hooked.

July 10, 1990

The person I would like in public office

The man was not for drugs. He fought against drugs and for better education. This man fought for rights for all people in the United States. He worked for years with the best man who was not violent. He helped organize other people in the States and city to keep their jobs and to learn how to get a job in their own city and town. He got other people to start their own businesses and to get their own houses. He got people to locate other people to re-educate in their own town about learning how to read. This man is a pastor from his home town. He is honest and concerned about others. This well-known person helps the poor and the homeless to get them some kind of aid. His issue about people is to help themselves. The thought is, I am somebody. This great person's name is Jesse Jackson.

Dear John,

I was impressed with reading about Danny and Tom's short time with the LVA.

Danny and Tom reminded me of myself. I feel good about reading about people in the LVA. They can be a great help to other people like myself.

I admire Danny and Tom for showing so much determination in learning the skills of reading and writing.

I am sure that a great deal of readers will follow these two men on their success.

John, I am most impressed with your wide range of vocabulary. You have impressed your intellectual readers. However, the ones not as educated as you, are not as gifted as you. With them it could be a problem. The sophisticated words that you use in your stories are difficult for the problem reader. Your vocabulary is much too hard to understand. If you want to get your point across, you must use words that they can relate to.

So please, when you write an article for people in the Literacy Volunteers and for student readers, write an article that they can read and understand.

Yours truly,

Derrick Matthews

Dear Friend,

I hope you are doing well. I'd like to open this letter with the life and the legend of Derrick Matthews. Let's start from the beginning. I was born in Hartford, CT in the late 40's. That's where my life begins. First let me say this. I was not born by myself; my brothers were there with me. I am a triplet which means I have two other people who look like myself. Our names are Derrell, Derrick and Dennis. We were born 8 minutes apart. My brothers and I were in high school together. In our last year of high school I got my brothers in the school talent show. When I told my brothers about the talent show they were shocked. My brothers asked me what we were going to do in the talent show. I said we were going to dance; I went on to tell them how great it would be. When they saw that I was serious they said, "Yes." That put my brothers and I on the good foot, being called dancers. We were well on our way of becoming the most popular group in Hartford. We had been dancers more than six years in a row. The three of us went in other directions in our lives.

Now I can tell you about myself. Three years back I made a drastic change in my life. I became a born again Christian and joined the Hopewell Baptist Church in Hartford. I love going to church and hearing the pastor speak about the Scripture. I am in the church choir and I have been voted as a trustee in the Hopewell Baptist Church. I am now learning to read the scripture and also learning to read the Word. In our church on Wednesday nights we have Bible study. One night the pastor asked me to read the scripture and that's when I found out I had a reading problem. A few days passed since that time. I found a friend named JoAnn Johnson who knew about the Literacy Volunteers. I called the Literacy Volunteers center. I talked to a person named George. He told me to come in and he gave me a test on my reading. I have been with Literacy Volunteers ever since. I will close this letter by saying, hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely yours,

Derrick Matthews

September 18, 1990

Letter to Derrick from England

D. Lyden
185 Fernhill Road
Bootle 20
L20 OAG
Merseyside
England

Hi Derrick,

I have just finished reading your letter you gave to Nigel Flanagan who visited you in New York. Let me tell you about myself. I am a student just like yourself. I am forty years of age, married, with two children aged thirteen and twenty. I have been unemployed for seven years. I have been going to college for two years now.

Well, the other day Nigel popped into our class and handed out letters and photographs from your group. He proceeded to ask us, if we would like to write back to your group, and we agreed. At the moment, I am trying to perfect my handwriting. As you can see from this letter, it is not very clear. I am also studying English, math and study skills. Nigel was amazed how similar our two groups were, with the same age group.

If you would like to correspond and would like to know more about our town or the way we learn, please reply.

Yours sincerely,

D. Leyden

Derrick responds to a pen pal letter from England

Dear D. Leyden,

I hope you are doing well. I was very much surprised to receive your letter.

I was waiting a long time to hear from someone like yourself. If it is possible I would like to have a photograph of you, please. I can write better if I can see who I am writing to. I would like to ask you a question, if I may. What is your first name?

You and I have a lot in common. 1) The first letter in our first names is "D." 2) I have three young men. Their ages are 18, 18, and 21 years old. I am a single parent and I am not married.

This year in the month of July, on the 9th, 1991 I will be at my job for 25 years. I am employed at Pratt and Whitney Technologies Corporation. They make engines for airplanes.

I have been with Literacy Volunteers for two years next month. The organizer of the reading center has asked me to become a tutor part-time on Saturday for two hours. So I will close this letter by saying I hope to hear from you soon.

Yours truly,

Derrick Matthews

March 10, 1991

SECTION 3

MONDAY NIGHT WRITING WORKSHOP

Introducing Each Other

We have written for many reasons in the workshop. We wrote letters to the governor of Massachusetts asking him to keep literacy programs going. We are reading a novel together called The Neon Bible. We have had some good noisy discussions about it. Another time, we read an essay about the pros and cons of T.V. Then we wrote about a program we especially liked or disliked. We have also talked and written about our families and growing up. When we decided to write about each other, here's what we wrote.

M., who asks that we use only her first initial, has a husband, a two year old, and two older children. She is a travel agent. Still she has found time to come to the Bob Steele Reading Center for almost two years. Whenever our group talks together, M. has something interesting to say. When we first met, she didn't want to write because she was worried about her spelling. Now, she loves to write. Her spelling has improved a lot because of her hard work.

Miguel is from Puerto Rico. Everyone calls him Mike. He used to drive a truck but now he is a chef. He graduated from the Connecticut Culinary Institute even though he needed help to read the recipes. He loves to cook and wants to improve his reading and writing skills so he can run his own business. He is working hard to get ready for the G.E.D. He adds a lot when we talk together and is also becoming a better speller. He is a student representative on the LVA-CT Board of Directors.

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Beverly is married and has a sales job which she loves. She is very eager to learn too. She almost never misses a class. She has really enjoyed our discussions especially about the novel we are reading. Now she is learning to get her ideas down on paper. She is also studying for the G.E.D.

Even though Carol will tell you she does not read well, she does. But she wants to read better. She isn't happy if she misses even one word! Writing will help her improve more as a reader. Carol is a lot of fun. She speaks with a pretty Jamaican lilt in her voice, and she can always get us laughing. That's important when we all work so hard.

We have had other members in our group. Petra comes whenever she can. She has a baby to take care of and can't always make it. But she is quick to learn when she is here. Her goal is to pass the G.E.D. exam. And she'll find a good job when her baby is older. Eric is from Jamaica. When he comes to the class, he often shares something from his life with us. We usually learn from the stories he tells us. Mark comes sometimes too. He is a very good reader who will enter technical school in the fall. Mark likes the novel we are reading and reads novels on his own as well. He definitely has an independent mind and adds his own ideas to our discussions.

George is a nice man. I have been knowing George about four or five years off and on. He was always nice to me. When I would ask for help he was always there for me. Although I was not there every week, he would call me to see if I was coming next week. When my tutors have had to leave, he would get me someone else.

Sharon and Sheila are two teachers at the literacy program. They both take time with us. They both always have something nice to say about everyone of us. When I first started this writing class, I didn't like it but Sharon said try it and now I'm glad I did. Sheila always gives me courage because when I get stuck, she writes to me and makes me feel better. So that's why I like both of them.

M.

George is a very nice man. He works very hard for Literacy Volunteers. He talks to people to keep the programs going on for a long time.

Sharon is very nice. She comes every week to help us learn more and help us with our reading and spelling and writing and to get us ready for the G.E.D. test. And we have homework every week and it is good for us.

Sheila is very nice too. She helps us with our work too and she has us write a lot about The Neon Bible and I enjoy it very much. It makes you write more and learn to spell better too. I am very glad to be here every week. It makes me feel good about myself.

Beverly

Sheila is my friend. We have fun together whether we are working or just hanging around. We don't have time to hang around very much these days because we are very busy together at Literacy Volunteers.

When I'm teaching, Sheila always adds some interesting point. When she's teaching, she's always so "into" what she's doing. I learn so much from her either way.

Sharon

I remember when I first met Sharon. George introduced me to her. He told me that she was a good teacher and she was teaching the Monday night class.

When I was with my tutor Tom, we read many books but I did not like to write and I felt like I was not learning. So George told me about the writing class.

Sharon has helped me so much; she has given me confidence. The bottom line is that Sharon is a good teacher.

Mike

George sometimes seems as if he is in three places at once. He has to do so many things to keep the literacy center running. He does a great job. He always has a smile for everyone, even when he is very busy. He has a lot of good ideas about how to do things.

Sharon teaches a G.E.D. group and also our writing clinic. She has taught writing at St. Joseph College too. She is very patient and good at explaining things. She has a good sense of humor and lots of energy. Sometimes you can see her sense of fun in the clothes she wears.

Sheila

[Some members of our group read an essay about standard English and about dialects people in our country use. Dialects are special languages based on English but that have their own flavor and their own way of saying things. Then we had to answer the question "Should English be made the official language of the U.S.?" in writing. Below you will see the results.]

I feel that there shouldn't be a law on what language I should speak. It is not right for you to tell me that I should speak English if I'm from a different country. That's like telling me to say no when I want to say yes. The law should be that you will teach me English if I want to learn it, not because you want me to. If you would have more programs for people so they can learn different languages, that would be better than making a law on making the English language the one we should speak. Some people's language is very important to them so they would not want to lose it because you want them to.

M., February 14, 1991

I don't believe that there should be a law. But I believe that if you are living in the United States you should be able to speak English. But they should have a program that teaches you the language. It is so important because if you don't speak English, you will not be able to get a good job.

All my life I could not read or write and I feel that I have missed so much. Now I am coming to the writing class on Monday and feel that the more I write, the better I will get.

Mike A.

For whom would this be of benefit? It seems the world is more and more becoming a place where we see the same television shows everywhere, the same fast food restaurants, the same clothing styles. We even seem to think the same thoughts. Now we would all have to use the same language, at least in public.

The world of work would function more smoothly and efficiently this way. Governments, schools and other institutions work best when each person speaks the same language, acts in expected ways, shows up at the same time, and so on. Perhaps they would work best with robots--ones who don't speak Chinese, or need day care for their kids, or stay home sick from time to time.

People, however, need to have their own individual ways, their own cultures, and their separate languages. Laws cannot really create human homes and neighborhoods where people can be comfortable and be themselves, but laws can and should protect them. People should be helped to change in ways that they need to and want to, such as learning the language and ways of the "mainstream" culture, but they should not be forced to change.

It is very important to elect lawmakers and other officials who understand these issues, and have respect for all people.

ANONYMOUS

[One evening we talked about Governor William Weld of Massachusetts and how he wanted to cut funds for literacy education out of the budget. Then, each of us wrote a letter to Governor Weld and his wife, telling them how we felt about his decision. First we read the assignment that you see right below this note and then discussed it and then wrote the letters.]

Governor William Weld of Massachusetts Recommends Cutting Funding for Adult Education Programs

Massachusetts has a deficit of $850 million. To get rid of this deficit, Governor Weld recommends cutting many programs. He would like to cut two Adult Education Programs. One of these programs offers many people their only chance to learn to read and write. If he is successful in forcing this cut, which amounts to savings of $750,000, Massachusetts will lose $4 million in federal funding for these programs.

Is this a good move? Or not?

Write Governor Weld a letter where you give your opinion on his efforts to reduce the deficit.

His Excellency William F. Weld
and Mrs. Weld
Executive Office
The State House
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Governor and Mrs. Weld,

I am taking time to write you about your cutting programs in order to cut the budget. You could lessen some repairs on the Jersey Rails. You could also cut the welfare fund because some of the people that are getting funds really do not need them and the people that really need the money are not getting it. You should think and look into the matter, it's really true. I think the Adult Education program is really necessary for people because it keeps the people that are in the program off the streets. It keeps crime off the streets. The reason I write this letter to you is that I am a student of the Illiteracy program in Hartford, Connecticut and it helps me and other students here in Hartford a lot. It keeps people from drugs so I would be thankful for that.

I am yours truly,

Eric

PO Box 12406

Hartford, CT 06112

Dear Governor and Mrs. Weld,

My name is Mike and I live in Connecticut. My tutor at Literacy Volunteers of Greater Hartford told me that you had a deficit and you were thinking about cutting some programs and one is the Adult Basic Education program. You know if you cut this program you will discourage many people. And in the long run they will not be able to find a good job. The Adult Education program is so important for people to learn to read and write. If you take the chance away from them they would not be able to live in society. So please take a good look at this problem. I sure don't know too much about your state's expenses but please don't cut Adult Education.

Yours truly,

Mike A.

Dear Governor and Mrs. Weld,

I was told by one of my tutors in my Adult Education class that you are thinking to cut two of your Adult Education programs. And I would like to take this time and write to both of you and tell you I think it would be a mistake if you did.

I think that there must be a way to keep your Adult Education programs. Here are some of my suggestions on how maybe you can work on this problem. 1. Maybe raise your sales tax some, as it is not as high as Connecticut's taxes are. 2. Cut the overtime in the Police and Fire Departments. 3. Maybe, have your big time businesses help you pay for some of your Adult Education programs. 4. Maybe work on your Welfare program, reform the system. 5. Just think about the long range cost and benefit that will come out of your Adult Education program. I think that I am living proof that Adult Education programs work.

Sincerely yours,

Mark

March 4, 1991

Dear Governor and Mrs. Weld,

I am a literacy volunteer in Hartford, Connecticut where I work with a group of highly motivated adult learners. The program in which I participate is able, with a very small budget, to make an enormous difference in people's lives.

Our group has learned of the Governor's plans to cut two adult education programs in Massachusetts. While we appreciate the seriousness of the budgetary problems in your state, we feel that these programs are too important to be cut. Also the loss of millions in Federal funding would mean a net loss to Massachusetts rather than a gain.

Perhaps the programs could be continued with funding coming in part from private sources. Business has a big stake in a literate work force, and has shown a willingness to support literacy programs. This and other alternatives should be explored before contemplating cuts to education, including adult literacy programs. Such cuts will create problems in the future, as people become less employable and continue to "fall through the cracks" of our society, and employers find it more and more difficult to hire trained people.

I hope you will consider the opinions of this literacy group very carefully; many of these letters could not have been written without our work.

Sincerely,

Sheila Lehman

March 4, 1991

Dear Governor and Mrs. Weld,

I run a Literacy Volunteers writing workshop for adult learners in Hartford. The other members of the workshop and I wanted to let you know how we feel about your wish to cut Adult Basic Education funding in order to reduce the state's hefty deficit.

The most obvious problem with your decision to cut this funding is the fact that you stand to lose approximately $4 million in federal funds by making this cut. Another problem with this decision is that you will be robbing people of a chance to become self-supporting. It's one thing if people aren't willing to put in the effort. But these Literacy Volunteers students are really motivated; I am sure students in similar programs in Massachusetts are similarly eager.

The long term costs of making this cut are many: higher welfare spending, increased spending on other basic needs like housing, and possible higher costs for the state's criminal justice system.

Living in Connecticut, we are aware that Massachusetts has a relatively low sales tax. Surely people can manage a slight increase, especially one which has the potential to yield substantial revenues. Also, if businesses see the state making an investment in Adult Basic Education, they are more apt to want to locate in the state.

Finally, with an $850 million deficit, a $750,000 cut would be a drop in the bucket. By comparison, the costs of this cut to the state seem considerable.

We wish you well in the difficult weeks ahead. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely yours,

Sharon W. Smith

March 4, 1991

[One evening M., and Carol, tackled the following question: If your name were difficult to pronounce or foreign, would you change it to get along better at work? Below are the results of that evening of writing.]

What I would do if my name were foreign and difficult to pronounce.

My name is Maynard. My clients and superiors are always stumbling over my name. I love my name because it is very sentimental to me, but I have decided to use my first name (Miss Carol) as my last name instead of changing my name.

My name is very sentimental to me. When I was growing up I always wanted to find out the reason my name was Carol Ernestine Maynard. I do not like Ernestine but I always ask my mother where she had got my name. She said my father had given me that name and she had liked it, it had suited me.

Years and years went by. My father was abroad so I could not ask him and I did not want to write to him and ask him a question like that, so I had promised that the next time I saw him I would ask him about the name. When I was fifteen, I had the chance. And I did ask. When I heard what he had said I felt happy in a way and sad in a way and that made me like my name even better.

My father had told me that when he was 28 he had met a lady and liked her. In those days, he was not thinking about getting married. The lady got pregnant and wanted to get married and because of that they broke up. So some of her family and friends planned to beat him up. He had a son by her and he did not get the chance to know his son, so he said when he got a baby he would name the child after the lady.

They had a son that he did not get to know. He said after six years he went back to the address in New York but he had never found the lady or his son, so he gave me her name, Carol Ernestine.

Carol Ernestine Maynard

Do you change it?

If you are the superiors then you don't have to worry. But if you just work there and you are asked, well it should be your decision.

I feel your name is very important. So when someone wants you to change it they should realize that your name is something that your mother and father took a long time to plan. Your name is something you can carry with you all your life. So when you said, change it, that is hard. Because if you are a boy then you will have your father's last name until you die. If you are a girl, your father's name will change. In some cases I still use my father's name because this is what is good in this situation. In this time, women have the right to keep their maiden name. In some cases, you have to compromise. Example: I work for a travel services company and on my card I have to write M. Baba L. because most people don't know my real name.

M.

[The next two essays are about T.V.]

The Bold and the Beautiful

The Bold and the Beautiful is a soap opera. One reason that I feel that this soap opera should stay on TV is that it deals with real life. It shows you that rich people have problems too. It also shows you how money can buy good and evil. It shows you how big business has problems, and because they are rich, money sometimes buys their way out of trouble. And other times, money does not help buy them out.

It also shows you that rich children have problems just like middle class and poor people. It shows you the middle class people can deal with rich people, and how they can feel "in" with rich people. It shows you how two brothers like the same person. It shows you how two sisters can not get along together. It shows you how school is important too. It shows you how to dress for different functions. It shows you the right way to eat, talk, and walk if you want to be a model. For it to be just a half hour show, it can give you so many different things. So it couldn't be so bad.

M.

To the Manager

Channel 3

Hartford, CT 06108

Dear Sir,

I am hereby writing to you as I saw in the January 10 paper that you were thinking about cancelling a program and the one will be Guiding Light. I am writing to you in the interests of my family and myself. For the past two years my family and me look forward to seeing that story. It is entertaining. It is not reality but some people take it as reality instead of as entertainment. That's the only bad thing I see about that show. It is a fun show; when I come home from work tired it gives me a laugh. Not only that, the culture of the story means a lot to me because it is a culture of black and white people who live as one.

I feel that your company should show Guiding Light. It shows that a person had a drinking problem and how he thinks that his family does not care. His family cares but the drinking has the best of him and they make a plan to hurt him. And he does not know. That's so bad.

I like to relax and watch it. In some parts of the story it is so much like today's life. I should be more than grateful if you carry on my favorite show, Guiding Light. Thank you.

Yours truly

Miss Carol Maynard

[The student was asked to write a letter about the fact that real estate agents sometimes steer Black or Hispanic people away from neighborhoods where White people live.]

Dear Sir,

I have read the article in the December 30, 1990 issue of the Hartford Courant about racial steering by real estate agents. I feel that if someone has the money to buy a house they should get that house, regardless of race.

I have seen the problems from racial integration living in Manchester all my life. When they started to bring kids from Hartford to the Manchester School System, there was trouble in the schools. There were lots of fights and not getting along. But now, there is not more fighting and students worked out their problems.

I think that the real estate agents should only sell the houses and the neighborhood will have to work things out. Maybe by having a neighborhood meeting once a month, they can talk about what they can do to help each other. I hope that the new governor will look into this problem.

Mark C.

[M. read a letter in which Larry complained about his boss and then she wrote the following response.]

I read the letter that Larry wrote. It was very touching. I can relate to some of the things that Larry wrote about. I used to have a boss like Larry's. For instance, I work for Hartford Hospital for fifteen years off and on. I started work in dietary, it was a good place to work until we got a new boss.

He started out O.K.. and then he started to get bossy. For instance, he used to tell you to do the walls, floor, and all kinds of things just to make you mad, knowing you don't have to. He used to make you feel that when you go home from work that you should do what he wanted. For instance, he would tell you not to go to the union meeting or you will be fired. A lot of people used to believe him so they wouldn't go to the union meeting. I was so glad when I left dietary.

M., February 14, 1991

Moving Day

Moving day.
A sad house,
With old smelly beds.
But outside,
A beautiful world
For those who can see.

[We wrote the above poem as a group. We summarized a chapter in the novel we were reading, The Neon Bible, paragraph by paragraph. Then Sheila made up a poem from the main ideas we found.]

[The tutors tape-recorded a discussion about The Neon Bible, a book the group was reading together. The tutors typed the discussion. Students were given copies to read and revise if necessary. Taping and typing a discussion is another way to make reading materials for a group.]

Sheila: AIDS has really affected the Church now because the Church has had to deal with it; it really has to help people. You can't be religious and not help people. They have had to look at how they've been treating gay people, and to look at the fact that some priests in the Church are gay, and deal with it in a better way.

Sharon: That's our definition of what it is to be religious. People have different definitions of what it means to be religious. The bible says literally that certain things shouldn't happen; you shouldn't do certain things. Some people think we should believe literally what it says. Some people think it's religious to just take the ideas.

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Sheila: Here there were two things in conflict like the idea that some religious people have that homosexuality is against the fundamental teaching. And the other thing that teaches you to be merciful. You can't be merciful if you are going to exclude people.

Eric: To be merciful, that's one point but the other point is that you can't find yourself indulging in behavior against God's ways.

Sheila: Yes, the church believes both those things but when you have something like AIDS you have to think what's more important.

Sharon: You might decide that going by the church laws is the way you are going to be religious.

Richard: I really believe that God loves everyone. It doesn't matter how the person is. As long as you don't hurt anybody or play tricks on people. As long as you love the person it doesn't matter about the sex part. It's just my opinion.

Mike: And even if you do wrong, you are forgiven.

Sharon: That's the Catholic way. Originally, it wasn't the Protestant way. If you did bad stuff, you were doomed. Back in the Puritan times.

Richard: What religion was that?

Sharon: It was Protestantism. That religion was not a merciful religion. The Catholic church has always had the tradition that you could go to confession and you can feel better. I like that better.

Sheila: Then there are religions in which you keep coming back and coming back in one life after another until you get purified.

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Eric: That's why Christ come. He died for us. Before the birth of Christ we just died with our sins. God sent down his son Jesus for our sins. So we can repent.

Beverly: In the Pennsylvania Dutch country, the Amish people--we went there a couple of years ago--in their religion you can do something wrong and they shun you; they wouldn't talk to you. They wouldn't sit at the table with you.

Sharon: They were trying to make Aunt Mae kind of an outcast in the book we read, The Neon Bible.

Beverly: Yes.

Sharon: And David and his mother being crazy. We have that problem today. We say, "Put that person away. That person is different."

[Students were invited to write autobiographies and to use these suggestions if they liked.]

Learner Profile

I want to invite each of the learners I work with to tell something about themselves for the book of writings that the Bob Steele Reading Center will publish soon.

You can write anything you want in order to introduce yourself to the readers of that book. Here are some suggestions of the kinds of things you might write:

Tell us why you started coming to the writing workshop.

Tell us what your goals are.

Tell us about where you were born and where you grew up.

Tell us what kinds of reading you like best. Newspapers? Stories?

Tell us about the work you do.

Tell us about what you like to do for fun.

Tell us what you like about yourself: what are your important good qualities?

I was born in Puerto Rico in Catano. My mother brought me to Hartford when I was 1 year old. We live on Albany Avenue. I went to SAND School. My work is to help my friends a lot and to learn English and to write more. What I like to do for fun is write letters to my boyfriend and be with my family. What I like about myself is that I take care of my daughter. I like to play with her and watch the things she does.

Petra

I was born in Hartford and I grew up in Hartford. When we became teenagers my father rented a nice house out in the country. I live in Rocky Hill. I work at a department store. I like my job very much.

I feel very good about myself coming here to learn to write better and read better. I started night school last fall. I am going back to night school in the fall to get my GED one day a week. When I get my GED, I want to be a tutor. My life is like Jello, when I have so much to do sometimes in one day.

Beverly D.

February 25, 1991

I was born in Kingston, Jamaica, W.I. I grew up in a little city out of the town of Kingston. The name of the little city is Carisbrook. From there to the town is about one hundred and seventy-six and three quarter miles. The city is very busy and also it is a tourists' resort. I left the country and lived in Kingston. The big city is where I learned my trade: carpentry, painting, and masonry. I love my job. Only one thing, with my job sometimes when I work for people, they don't want to pay. That makes me feel so disappointed.

For that reason I left Jamaica and came to America. I always wanted to come here. The first place I came to was Newark, N.J., I lived with my aunt. It was very difficult for me to get a job. Then I called up a cousin of mine and asked him if he could get a job for me.

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He said yes, you could come and work with me, but just at that time things did not work right for me. Then I went to a factory and got a job there. I stayed for about 6 years. Then I got laid off. Then I got another job at another factory. I worked there operating a grinding room machine that makes and dresses different kinds of parts. I worked for another two and a half years. Then I got laid off. Now I am putting myself together by starting my own business.

I love to help people in any way that I can. As I move around, I see so many people on the street that need help in different ways. Now I have started to go back to school. I hear about this Literacy Volunteers program. I start to go there since February this year, 1991. Since I started, I find myself improving in my reading and writing. I love it. I have lots of fun with my tutors, also my classmates. It gave me confidence to continue, so I can help somebody in my church and my community. Another thing I would like to carry on with my school for is that I want to read blueprints.

My most important quality is that I treat other people equal as myself.

Eric R.

I was born in Puerto Rico in 1947. I came to Connecticut when I was seven. I grew up in Waterbury and went to school there.

For twenty years I was a truck driver but last September I enrolled at CCI *[Connecticut Culinary Institute]* and graduated as a chef. Now I work at Trusthouse Forte Food Servers.

Things that I like to do include running and working out. I am a Black Belt and I've been a Karate student since I was sixteen.

The things I like about myself are that I am a good father, a good son, a good friend and I like to work hard.

Mike A.

I was born in Connecticut but I'm no Yankee. I was brought up in the South so I love hot weather. You can have New England weather!

I remember living in Louisiana and Virginia as a child. Not much. Just a few things.

I am a teacher. I like to write and I like to help other people learn to write. I am always interested to hear what my students have written. Everybody's story is interesting!

For fun, I like to play cards with my 11-year-old son and I love to read.

I like the fact that I am a friendly person. What I don't like is the fact that I am easily distracted. I am definitely interested in too many things. Right now my life is like driving through two tunnels at the same time. It is difficult but there is light at the end of each of them.

Sharon Smith

I don't know how long I wanted to be a chef. So I started to investigate and I called my friend Stephen Plakotaris, a manager of four restaurants. They are called Arizona 206, Arizona Cafe, Contrapunto, and Yellow Fingers. They are located at 60th and Third Avenue in New York City. He invited me to spend a weekend with him and his staff. So I went to see him.

When I got there it was 8:00 am and already the place was busy. I met Chris the assistant manager of Yellow Fingers. He took me down to the kitchen and I worked prepping for lunch. Then, from there I changed my clothes and worked with the hostess serving people for lunch. After lunch I joined Chris and ate lunch upstairs at Contrapunto. They serve Italian cuisine.

Then we talked about the restaurant business. He asked me what did I think about what I had done so far. I looked around me and saw the chef working very enthusiastically and I said to myself this is for me. After lunch we joined the other three assistant managers. Oh, by the way, Stephen had knee surgery that morning so he left me in good hands.

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Another thing that I did that day was to attend a manager's staff meeting. Then I went across the hall to the Arizona 206 where I helped seat people for dinner. I also spent 20 minutes talking to the head chef. She said if I was interested in becoming a chef, then I should get some experience either in a restaurant or at a school.

On the way home, I thought about changing careers but it seemed too risky to me. But then I thought about all the fun that I had that day and said this is what I want to do! When I got home I started to look for cooking schools and that's when I found out about CCI.

And the rest is history. After six months of hard work, I am no longer a truck driver and I am employed by a large food service company. Every day I learn something new about being a chef. I am very happy about the things that I have accomplished so far and I look forward to what the future will bring for me.

Mike A.

Journal Conversation

[M. and her tutor "talked" to each other by writing in a journal. Sometimes they wrote about M's writing and sometimes about their lives. We are thankful that M. was willing to share these lines from her journal.]

January 20, 1990

Dear M.,

You seem to enjoy remembering about your times spent with your grandparents, about how Daddy would say prayers every day and about grandmother combing your hair.

I think about how my parents will never know my youngest son; my mother never knew any of her grandchildren. She died before any were born. My father died 2 weeks after my youngest son was born. But, as you say, the good times have outweighed the bad.

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My older son got to know my father, his grandfather, very well and now that he is getting to be a man he is becoming more like my father. That's a good combination: to be like my husband and like my father. Are your sons getting to be more like their grandaddy? Let's keep a conversation going in this notebook when we can't be together. I like sharing stories with you about our families but you can write down anything, as long as you feel comfortable doing it. Don't worry about mistakes; just keep writing. We can always work on spelling when we are together.

February 2

M. answers:

Well, I don't know what to say, but you want me to write so I will try. I told you all I could about my grandparents so now I will tell you about my three sons. My oldest son's name is T. He is twenty years old now. He's not a bad boy but he has his share of trouble. Seems like trouble follows him around. He does good for a long time, and then it seems like trouble comes around.

Now I will talk about my other son, A. He is twenty years of age. He is a good boy too. His problem is he just wants to be grown man not a young man. He did fine at school like I asked but after that he just wanted to run around. Now all we talk about is when are you going to get a job. T. and A. don't live with me because of lots of things but I miss them so much sometimes. Now I give all my attention to S., that's my two year old. Two is a difficult age because it seems like I'm always saying, "Stop" to S. all the time. But I miss him when he stays away from home. He's at that age where you love him one minute and the next you pound him. He cries a lot and sometimes it makes me so mad, I don't know what to do. So I usually count to ten.

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February 7

Dear M.,

I can also write about my sons. Mine mean so much to me. Yours also obviously mean a lot to you. When my 11-year-old son was a baby, he cried a lot before he would finally fall asleep. He did not like to miss anything.

When you write in this journal, don't worry about the spelling so much. It's more important to keep on writing down your ideas as they come to you. The time to worry about spelling is when you want to "go public" with your story.

I am looking forward to seeing what you wrote at home about the pros and cons of TV. Goodbye for now.

February 16

M. answers:

Well, I don't know what to write about now. We talked about my sons and my grandparents, so now we will talk about me.

I wish I could read and spell better because, if I could, then I would be happy.

I could get a better job. Not that my job isn't good, it's just not what I would like to do. I would like to work with kids. For as long as I could remember, I wanted to work with kids. When I finished school, I wanted to go to nursing school, but I know I couldn't read or spell good enough, so that's a dream I lost. So I would work on jobs that I could get by without spelling and reading so much.

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February 22

Dear M.,

There are so many things I want to say to you that I don't know where to start. You really help all of us have an interesting and good time at the writing workshop. Thank you.

There is a lot that is very good in your writing: you say interesting things in a natural way; your sentences work well for the most part. I'll suggest what I think we should work on together and then you can tell me what you want to work on.

First, when you read over your essay, make sure that every word you want to say is actually on the page. Sometimes, when you have a lot to say, the important thing is to just get the ideas down. Then, you can go back and add words and work on spelling. Please tell me how I can do that. I have some ideas but I also want to hear your ideas. Another thing to do when you go over your essay is to make sure you are putting the final letters on verbs and plural nouns that call for an "s."

Have you given up your dream of going to nursing school or working with kids? If either of those ideas still "live" in you, let me know. It might not be too late.

Finally, I'd like to suggest that you keep a list of words on the last few pages of this notebook, words you want to learn to spell. I've already put a few back there. Please add others you want to learn.

Goodbye for now.

March 21

M. answers:

You ask me if the idea of being a nurse and working with kids is still something I wish to do. "Yes."

continues on next page

You ask me what.I want to learn in that reading and writing class. I want to learn how to read a book, newspaper, card, and notes. I just want to feel like everybody else that knows how to read.

On Wednesday we have Bible class. I would like to go but I know that someone might ask me to read. So I just don't go. As for writing, I write but as you can see I always use small words. When I'm writing I think of words that are no more than six letters. Sometimes I use bigger words but when I do , I have to look them up.

If you could, I would like to take a test to see which level that I read on.

It is so important for me to learn how to read before my son gets of age to understand me when I'm reading to him. With my older sons, I had my oldest son do all the reading and writing for me.

March 28

Dear M.,

You always have something to say when you write. Many people often find that part the hardest part but you don't. So that's great! We definitely need to work together on spelling and when you write something, you should give yourself the time to go back over the spelling. You often know when a word is misspelled--that's 3/4 of the battle. I don't want you to worry about spelling when you are writing in this journal. I can usually read what you write even if some words are misspelled.

I'd be happy to give you a reading test. We can make a date when I see you Monday.

Here are some more words for your word bank:

listen

tutor

enthusiasm

continues on next page

tedious

unfortunately

Please add them to your list at the back of this journal.

M., I am very moved by what you have written this week in the journal. Can we revise it together and may I add it to the book of student writing? If you don't want me to use your name, that's O.K.. let's talk about it.

Goodbye for now.

April 1

M. answers:

Now, I can see that I am reading better because I'm always picking up something to read. I also found out that reading can be fun too because when you can read it seems like something good is happening to you. I also know how good I feel about myself. Because I started going to Weight Watchers and losing weight and that's a good feeling too.

CHAPTER 9
THANKS TO LITERACY VOLUNTEERS

[C.D. is a 32 year old high school graduate who came to LVGH in early September, 1989.]

To My LVA Tutor

I would like to thank you for helping me when I need it the most. I really appreciate it. Before I met you, I couldn't even pick out a card, but now I can and I would like to thank you very much. I know a little bit more than before.

Have you ever heard of the crying heart? Maya Angelou talks about the heart of a woman. I can tell you about the heart of a person who can't read.

To Whom it May Concern:

My name is Alfonso C. Logan. I'm forty-nine years old, and I'm glad I came to the **Literacy Volunteers**. I hope the program will continue, for it can help so many other people. One-on-one is better for me than a group of people because I have learned so much in such a short time.

When I finish, I would like to return to tutor to help someone like me.

Alfonso C. Logan

I want to tell you how **Literacy Volunteers** is the greatest thing that happened to me. I am a thirty-five year old woman and have a problem reading. I lost my job because the company moved. The job was very simple, no reading involved. I didn't know what to do.

My husband called **Literacy Volunteers** for me. The tutor and I are meeting every Saturday.

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We are working on the key cards and spending time on reading. I read a book with the tutor. The tutor made sure that I understand what I am reading. Now I am reading the newspaper, News for You, with the tutor. She gives me homework to do. Thank God for **Literacy Volunteers.**

Anonymous

How do you feel this program has helped you so far?

Well, when I started, I was not reading too well. I had forgotten some of the math and how to write a sentence with Capital and periods. I have a tutor to help me get better at my reading and writing. I'm saying words out loud. If it wasn't for the **Literacy Volunteers** I wouldn't know what to do without John, you are doing a good job of helping me learn again. I thank you, John, very much for you help. I feel that I'm a lot better than what I was when I started. Thanks to John, for his help and time that you took out for me. I feel that it would be good if I went to school 3 times through a week.

Darlene Wilson

[The statement below was written by Steve Maston, a Reading Center student, during his final tutoring sessions. Congratulations Steve! We're happy to be able to say that we'll miss you! Good Luck!!]

When I first heard about the Literacy Program on T.V., I was afraid to admit I needed help. After thinking about the program I decided to call. I then was introduced to my tutor Shirley Zembruski. Mrs. Zembruski helped me learn reading and spelling skills. I'm very thankful to the program and my tutor for all the help they've given me.

Steve Maston, 1988

A Letter of Appreciation

to the Literacy Volunteers of America in Greater Hartford

I am writing to say thank you!! Thank you for the program and for allowing this program to come inside the Somers institution.

And I want to also thank you for sending me a wonderful tutor, and who has become a good friend. So I also thank you, Mrs. Dolly Goldfarb, who has worked hard with me, and now it is paying off because now I can read better. I can begin to see life for the first time, by reading.

I am happy about winning the Dorothy Clark award. Thank you Literacy Volunteers, Mrs. Goldfarb, my tutor.

Very truly yours,

Mr. Charles Steadwell

At first I wanted a tutor to read cookbooks. Another reason I wanted to read is to read with my boys and help them with their homework. Robert likes to read my book Practice in Reading.

I didn't think I could do it but I love to read how to make things. Also I want to be able to write letters.

Raymond Hardy

(Lee Rafferty, Tutor)

My Experience with Literacy Volunteers

I remember when my son Carlos brought me the school notice about Literacy Volunteers. The notice explained that the program was for people not speaking English or not reading or not writing. Also, it told the telephone number, address, days and time when I could go to talk to a girl about the program.

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She explained to me that the program is person to person. I liked that idea! After I registered, I waited one month until she called me to start. I started going on June 5, 1987 at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

The first day of class I enjoyed very much. It's hard to study at night after working eight hours and cooking dinner and attending to my family. In my home my son doesn't like to speak English with me. Also, the English is difficult and I needed dedication, practice and time to advance.

After a year my teacher went to Washington, DC to start a new teaching job. I also like my new teacher. With her I learn very much because she has more time, dedication and patience with me when I have difficulty with pronunciation, reading and writing. More than a teacher and a student, we have become friends.

The class is a variation of conversation, reading, writing and vocabulary. Sometimes when I come back home from class, I'm depressed or down, because I feel I have not advanced. I am forgetful and tell my teacher I am sorry because I can't pronunciate well, or forget some words. She has patience and explains again.

This program is very good. The person to person attention is an asset. Now I speak more, understand more and read easier. I like this program, I like my teacher and I will continue in this program.

ANONYMOUS

July 1989

I am pleased to relate the following accomplishments of my student in E.S.L.

Dong came to this country November 1, 1989. She had studied English in high school and knew the English alphabet. However when she was tested at LVGH she was at '0' in comprehension and when I started with her, she did not understand a single word.

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Because of her intense desire to speak English, she and I have worked at social conversation and we have just had our 24th hour together. In this short amount of time, she has:

- reached assessment level 2 with ease
- obtained a library card
- talked to me on the telephone
- related to staff member at Arbor Street that she would like coffee with sugar and no milk. (The fact that we were at 'the school' and included helped her confidence immensely.)

Before joining LVGH, I could not have appreciated fully the amount of effort she is investing nor the satisfaction I would receive in hearing "Hello, teacher? This is Dong."

I wish there were some way of reaching potential volunteers who are hesitant to make the first step. I was one of the very unsure and once I made that step I was surrounded by support and encouragement. If there is anything I can do to help spread the word, let me know.

JoEllen Jansing

June 15, 1990

First of all I would like to thank all of the Literacy Volunteers for the time they spend as volunteers. I am 42 years old and most of my life I've been deceiving and cheating myself as I grew because I could not read and when I would try to read, people would laugh and I would have them know what I did good like them and that was fighting. As I grew older I tried to work better than them.

When I came to America from Puerto Rico I was 12 years old and I was in fifth grade. When I started school here I went to second grade. I felt alone.

continues on next page

I also felt angry because the school system had cheated me by putting me in a lower grade. I felt many other feelings but I couldn't describe them when my brother or sister would ask me why I would get in so many fights?

A year after they got to go to another school. And I started skipping school and hanging out with older people drinking and smoking. After a time I was addicted to that way of life. And year after year my disease brought me from one institution to another. I felt stupid for most of my life because I could not read or write. I tried to deal with my life experiences but I grew to hate myself more. It took coming to prison for me to learn how to read.

Today it feels beautiful to stop hurting and hiding my inability to read. And I owe it all to Literacy Volunteers and I cannot say enough of all the good things this program has done for me. People now ask me what is different about me and I say nothing but I know many things are different with me. I'm not saying I'm equipped for a reading competition but I am improving every day. I believe someday I will be able to give back some of what this program has given me to other people.

G. C.

July, 1990

Why I Became A Tutor

Helping others has always been important to me. I know that as long as I can give someone in need a helping hand, I will always feel good about myself. When you give something of yourself, the reward does not have to be materialistic. It is an inner feeling of joy and personal satisfaction. Tutoring gives me that.

Seeing a student smile after completing a difficult sentence makes my heart fill up with happiness. What many of us take for granted is a great task for a person just learning how to read.

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I know that when students come to Literacy Volunteers it's because they have a desire, a desire to know more. When this happens we need people like me and many others to respond positively. This might be the last step in many cases.

The Literacy Volunteer tutoring program enables all people involved, to become better people, both the tutor and student.

In a society like ours, with all of the technological advancements, we have to survive and one of the ways is through reading. Most places, schools, churches, colleges and places of employment, their principal way of communicating to the people is through reading.

Teaching students to read, or improving their reading abilities is a gift they will cherish forever. Their opportunities will increase, a better job, obtaining a driver's license, sending cards to relatives, writing letters to friends. "How Exciting!"

Together we will meet the challenge, and the desired goal. I know through the Literacy Volunteers tutoring program a person's world will open up.

For these reasons and many more not mentioned, I chose to become a Literacy Volunteer Tutor.

Thanks LVA for being there.

Laura Taylor

CHAPTER 10
TUTOR TALK

Suggestions for working with these learner-generated materials:

When working with student writing or any other reading material, I have found it helpful to spend time discussing the passage with the student in some detail. Not only does this practice help the student to focus on important aspects of the piece he has just read, but it also targets learning gaps and problem areas for the tutor's information. Since the adult learner is a mature person who very likely has good (or even very advanced) comprehension skills, discussion of the text provides a section of the lesson in which he is virtually assured of some success even if he is presently a very low-level reader. Confidence building of this kind is invaluable to the adult student working hard to master a skill that most of us take for granted.

I usually focus on the following two areas when initiating a discussion about a passage:

1. Concrete facts - Ask the student to report back (in his own words. if he wishes) a few important facts taken directly from the piece; *i.e.,* Where did this take place? or, What kind of car did the author drive? If the student doesn't remember the answer, allow him to search the passage and point it out to you when he finds it. Even if he does answer correctly, I like to ask him to find "proof" in the passage, thus forcing him to get back into the piece. Of course, the tutor should offer guidance if the student has a particularly hard time with a question, but the student should be allowed the chance to finally find the answer if at all possible.

2. Analysis and Opinions - Depending on the type of piece with which you and your student are working, discuss some questions which will make the student think about what he has read; *i.e.,* Why do you think the author acted that way in that situation? Would you have done the same thing? Why or Why not?

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This kind of analytic thinking will help the student to see the activity of reading as more than the decoding of letters into words and words into sentences; rather, reading becomes a process through which information, thought, and emotion are passed from writer to reader. Hopefully, the student will sense that his interpretation of the written material is just as important as the author's intentions. Once again, be sure to ask the student to back up his opinions with material from the passage, if appropriate.

I have found that student writings are an effective tool in tutoring adults learning to read. They provide variety in terms of length, subject matter, and reading/writing level. Students are interested in reading pieces authored by people who are struggling with (and overcoming!) the problem that they share—illiteracy. Also, tutor/student discussions of these passages may provide springboards for students to write pieces of their own. The possibilities are limited only by the dedication, hard work, and imaginations of the tutor and the student.

Teri Fuller

April, 1991

Ideas For Writing Projects

In addition to ideas for writing projects sprinkled throughout the book, consider the following:

The pen pal letters printed on pages 32-33 and 96-98 are the result of a friendship between a staff member of the LVGH, Steve Bender, and a man from Leeds, England. Steve's friend came to a writing workshop at the Center and told the group about a literacy project he knew of in Leeds. He asked the members of the group if they would like to write letters to some of the people in the literacy classes in Leeds. So some members of the group did write letters. It took a while for responses to come but when they did it was very exciting.

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If students and tutors want to write to students involved in literacy programs in England, they could contact the following programs:

Women's Writing Group
Drop-In Educ. and Advice Center
54 Corn Exchange
Leeds, U.K.

Centerprise
Hackney Reading Center
136/138 Kingsland High Street
Hackney, London E8 2NS

[These addresses are courtesy of Marilyn Gillespie, ED. D. University of Massachusetts 1991]

Her book, Many Literacies: Modules for Training Adult Beginning Readers and Tutors is available from:

The Center for International Education
285 Hills South
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, Mass., 01003

It has also come to our attention that a Canadian literacy project is inviting students to respond in writing to essays and stories by their students. Two of these essays appear elsewhere in this book. Responses will be published in their magazine, Voices. Send responses to:

Voices
14525-110A Avenue
Surrey, B.C. Canada V3R2B4

The New Readers Press kindly granted us permission to use materials from two series, Remembering and Let's Work It Out. News For You is also published by The New Readers Press. To request information about materials for adult literacy students, write:

New Readers Press
1320 Jamesville Avenue
Box 131
Syracuse, New York 13210

Another idea for working with these materials is to ask students to make-up titles for untitled stories and essays and then discuss why they think their titles are appropriate.

Notes From A Conference On Literacy

Last March, I went to my first LVA state conference. It was exciting to meet so many other tutors and students who share my feelings about the problems of illiteracy. Best of all, the workshops I went to gave me some good ideas which I have since used with success in my lessons.

My first workshop dealt with the "whole language" approach to teaching reading. With this method, students work with whole paragraphs or stories rather than on learning how to pronounce and read single words, using phonics or word patterns. "Whole language" draws a lot on the adult student's life experiences which help him read the passage or story more easily. Why? He knows what the passage is about because he has talked over the topic of the passage before he reads it. In talking about the passage the student remembers and shares what he already knows about the topic.

My second workshop dealt with teaching writing skills. I attended this workshop because my student had said he wanted to improve his writing. But he found it difficult to get started or practice writing because he couldn't spell many of the words he wanted to use. Although he truly wanted to learn, this frustration became a real stumbling block.

The first thing I learned at this workshop was that my student was not alone. In fact, judging from the other tutors' comments at the workshop, the problem seemed almost universal. Fortunately, I also found out about several ways to help my student out of his frustration.

First of all, the student must be convinced that it's acceptable for his first draft to be less than perfect. This step may sound easier than it actually is. I explained to my student that no one produces a perfect piece of writing on the first try. To one lesson, I brought a first draft of something I had written for work, complete with cross-outs, inserts, and other changes, so that he could see what it looked like. This concrete example impressed him somewhat, but it still took him a long time to break the habit of tossing out sheet after sheet of paper because something was misspelled.

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Next, the student can use "invented spelling" whenever he wants to use a word he can't spell. The idea here is for the student to get his thoughts down on paper and get help with the spelling later. A student can write the word the way it sounds to him, write the first letter or two of the word with a blank line to show where the rest of the word will go, or simply use a blank line for a word he has no idea how to spell. If appropriate, the student can even draw a picture in the blank to remind himself of what word goes there.

Once again, it was somewhat difficult to get my student to use these ideas; he is a perfectionist when it comes to his writing. An important breakthrough for us was letter-writing. My student wanted to write to his family badly; he could accept the fact that he would have to rewrite and edit his letter several times before he felt it was good enough to send. This project gave him a real and important purpose for his writing.

Teri Fuller, June, 1990

GED Prep

Much of the emphasis here at the Center is on assisting the student to find his or her voice through authentic expression in writing on issues, ideas and topics either grounded in personal experience or in some way resonant to the student's natural curiosity. In this, it is believed, the student may find the stimulus to write since the process of becoming literate here is directly connected to the student's desire to make sense of his or her personal experience and/or the immediate world in which personal experience is embedded. I am very much committed to this approach to literacy education and recommend for your consideration the National Council of Churches' view of Literacy Defined.

A fair number of our students, particularly at the higher levels, however, are interested in obtaining a GED. The GED exam includes, now, a 200-word essay, often on a topic of general interest, but one in which your student may or may not have any particular interest. For the purposes of the exam, therefore, it is important that your student have some practice as well in answering the kinds of questions it will ask and in knowing the kinds of criteria by which the essay will be evaluated.

In preparing a student for the test, a danger lies in the potential to transform the writing process into a mechanical exercise which is antithetical to much of what we've considered previously. Thus, a tendency may be to have students write essays on topics not particularly interesting and to evaluate them based on the criteria of the test without much concern for the actual "voice" of the student. To guard against this, even while preparing the student to respond to the exam question, the following may be useful:

a) Remind your student that he or she is focusing on a specific goal now and the writing task at hand is at least somewhat different than it had been since the evaluator now is external rather than internal.

b) Do not ignore personal writing; instead, integrate GED preparation into your lesson planning so that the test does not become an all-out obsession. We have seen several students get extremely up-tight with this approach, where all of a sudden the learning process was transformed from a process of discovery to a competitive contest. While there may be a tendency toward this in preparing for the exam, it is critical that students don't leave us with the impression that education, in the final analysis, is preparing for events like exams.

c) Early on, encourage your student to respond to exam-like essay questions at least in part from personal experience. *(Pass out possible exam-type questions).* Through this, they would talk about the issue, make lists and a first draft. The essay allows 45 minutes for a 200-word essay, so there is plenty of time to relax and to go through much of the pre-writing process before committing a final draft to print. Over time, you can work with your student on a variety of exam-type essays, relating the question to personal experience, at least in part and developing skills to exercise a variety of pre-writing strategies.

d) The evaluation criteria upon which the exam is rated is quite similar to many of those aspects stressed in process writing approaches. Thus, writing mechanics accounts for only 1/6 of the total score. Content, organization, the use of evidence and language are also considered and the exam is evaluated "holistically," which means that it is assessed in its totality rather than by focusing on specific errors.

While the GED writing test is based on a more objective and mechanical set of

criteria than the aims of process writing where the writer is viewed as the final arbiter of his or her work, the GED writing requirement offers enough parallels with process writing so that it can be reasonably integrated within a total writing program rather than sharply demarcated as another form of writing.

If we are committed to student empowerment, then one of our tasks may require us to at least begin assisting students to prepare for the GED. Therefore, responding to the types of writing samples that may be found on the exam is important. The temptation remains, however, to turn the process into a mechanical exercise. If literacy education, in the final analysis, is not to become alienating, then we need to assist students in grasping the extent to which literacy, in its variety of expressions, is relevant to one's life course through its many stages and experiences. Preparing for the GED exam may be such a stage. Finding, developing and refining one's "voice," in writing as well as in speech through discourse and accumulated reading, are accomplishments worthy throughout all of life's stages and experiences.

George Demetrion

About Tutoring A Group

The benefits of group tutoring are directly related to the number of students in the class. As we know, a student is always eager to share his culture with us in a one-to-one setting. This is also true in the group setting which provides many chances for cultural exchange. In our group, we have several people from different cultures. We compare history, food, geography, customs, music, ideas about education and on and on.

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Another advantage of group tutoring is that each student learns to understand English as spoken by the others, so the tutor's accent isn't the only accent the students hear.

Because you are dealing with more than two people, conversation flows easily with only a little coaching. The students are more willing to take part in work or sentence games when there are many smiling faces around. As in a one-on-one session, the class sets its own goals and priorities.

Another consideration is that it's all too easy for a tutor to forget the pressure and intense focus a student feels in a one-on-one relationship. With more than one student, students have a moment or two to relax and regroup within the class itself. A moment's respite can offer a student a whole new outlook as the tutor moves from one exercise to another.

As the members of the class get comfortable with one another, the students begin to interact with one another, coaching and correcting grammar and even pronunciation. This approach must be carefully watched by the tutor to be sure no one is offended and also to be sure the correcting student is right. So far it's worked beautifully.

For me personally, one of the most important benefits is that you always have a class. Even if one or two students can't make it, you still are needed to tutor.

Overall, group is grand!

Betty Testa

Maureen Swift

A Tutor Reflects On His Experience With LVGH

C. and I worked together for approximately 6 months at LVA. He was interested in English not only as a second language, but as a language--period. In his native tongue, Portuguese, C. was a writer of prose, poetry, and song lyrics.

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He often told me of times when he would awaken at night with literary ideas pouring through his head, and how he would stay up until morning getting them on paper. Although he would relate some stories to me in English, unfortunately none of his work has been translated on paper. Bringing C. to a point where he could do his own translation was a distant but achievable goal to strive for while we worked together.

C.'s passion for writing carried over into his verbal manner. He loved to tell stories, and we frequently spent whole sessions talking about one of his poems or short stories. I felt these sessions were ones in which we had the most progress with the English language, as these were ones with the most enthusiasm and sincerity. When I bore down on verb tenses, or some grammatical detail, the sessions inevitably became dull and tedious, and progress was slow. I found the best way to teach C. English was to tell him how the language worked within the context of his own ideas.

All in all, my experience with LVA was quite rewarding, and I wish to resume it upon my return to the U.S.

Bruce Hooper

September 16, 1989

Notes From A New Tutor

A few years after my husband and I retired, his health began to fail, very gradually. Finally, he went to the hospital and spent the last 34 months of his life in a nursing home.

By last summer, I began to know that I would soon be alone. Having heard and read about LVA from the TV and newspapers, I decided to look into getting trained.

Through Joseph Sanady, I got the names to call and soon found myself in a class for tutoring ESL students with Shirley Gold as the teacher. I joined the class in early October. I was ready for my first student in 3 weeks.

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My student is an adult Hispanic and was involved in radio and TV work in Peru. He came to Hartford some 3 years ago with his wife and small daughter. *(She is now 10 years old.)* He wants to learn to speak English as well as his native language so that he can find a place for himself in American TV or radio.

I did try to tell him that he will probably not speak this new language as well as he speaks Spanish. But I told him he will, hopefully, learn to speak well enough to find a good position. *(He also studies grammar several mornings a week at an Adult Education class.)*

He has done several assignments for local Spanish-language radio, TV and newspapers here. He prefers, however, to work with an English-language radio station. He also spoke quite well on a Brad Davis breakfast club LVA show 2 months ago.

Because the student is very smart and knows a lot, I find that I can't go "by the book" with him. At the start, I got some phonics cards from the St. James Street library and some books with stories about different jobs, including making films.

I also brought some books from home such as Studs Terkel's Working which proved too boring for him.

We have now a system where the student reads from magazines and newspapers, sometimes on tape, so I can correct his speech. Then we discuss the reading. He is very interested in many aspects of American politics and our way of life.

He also has many ideas about better home lives and teaching for our children.

As part of our work, he has written a letter to the editor which he has mailed to 9 area newspapers. The student's letter was published in March of 1989 in the Vernon newspaper.

I want to thank George Demetrion who often helps us out when we work together at the Bob Steele Reading Center.

George has encouraged me to work with the student in a format which he finds helpful.

Betty Ross

Teaching Writing At Literacy Volunteers

I don't really go to Literacy Volunteers to teach; I go to learn.

I'm not talking squishy liberal platitudes here. I don't go to learn how the other half lives, or to rediscover how Incredibly Fortunate I have been in life *(though one would have to be pretty obtuse not to glean a bit of that).* I go to learn how hard it is to write.

You see, I write for a living--I work in Corporate Communications for a large insurance company. I spend several hours a day in front of a word processor trying to make corporate life a little more comprehensible to the rank-and-file. Writing has always been easy for me, and this kind of writing long ago ceased being a challenge. And I kind of miss that.

Every week at Literacy Volunteers, I am able to re-experience the mystery and pleasant ambiguities of putting pen to paper, and I am able to pass on a bit of what I've learned over the years.

One of the myths I try to dispel when working with students is the half-truth that writing is creative, that all you need to do is pour what's in your heart on to the page, then go back and correct the spelling and sentence structure.

Writing isn't creative--it's <u>persuasive.</u> The difference between the two is the focus. "Pouring your heart out" places the focus on the writer. Persuading places the focus on the reader, which is where it should be. To persuade, the writer must assemble a well-reasoned argument and support it thoroughly. This is a very useful skill, even when not staring at a blank piece of paper.

When I teach a writing class, I insist that everyone start with an argument, not a bunch of sentences.

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That means assembling an outline--though I've noticed that most students glaze over when I used the word "outline." We talk through the points the student wants to make, I suggest things that need to be added to make the argument whole, and then we put the points in an order that seems to make sense.

The advantages of working this way are that the student gets to see if his or her argument "works," whether it flows, before doing the hard work of writing an essay. I always tell them that good writing is clear thinking, not making grammatical sentences and spelling correctly.

The various points of the outline generally correspond to paragraphs, so students learn a valuable structural lesson--one that is notoriously hard to explain after the sentences are written out--right at the beginning. And, as part of that, a lot of the editing can be done by the student simply by asking them if they followed the format they laid out in the outline. If I edit their writing for them, often students will simply defer to my judgement without fully understanding the reasoning behind it.

Most students find outlining to be a mysterious and awkward process at first, and they don't see what I'm trying to show them until they've finished fleshing the argument out in the essay (the outline generally consists of mere phrases). But so often there is that flash of recognition when they read through the complete essay and see for themselves that it works, that it goes from A to B to C, that the reader can understand the author's point of view. They know they've done it themselves, and they can do it again with the tools they've just acquired.

That's the payoff for me--seeing someone find the skills within themselves to articulate what's on their mind. Every time I see that happen, I learn again why writing is so hard, but also so essential and so much fun.

Brian Prileau

I first became interested in Literacy Volunteers when Doris Anne and Vurlean attended a meeting of the Outreach Department of our church. Their presentation was excellent, and, as a retired school teacher, I felt I could be of some assistance in that program. It was Vurlean telling of her inability to read while her children were growing up and of how much she missed being able to read to them that was the clincher. She spoke of the tragedy of losing a daughter but that her ability now to read was something they can never take away from me!

To date, I have worked with three students with varying abilities to read. One of the first men found it too easy to skip lessons, often without notifying me or other people in charge of the program. He has been dropped from the program. The second student, with whom I worked for most of a year, has taken a full-time position and was unable to continue within the hours I could allot to him. I am now working with a young woman who has fairly good reading ability, but who wishes to improve. I feel she has raised her reading at least two grade levels in the past three months.

I feel that the most important thing in working with any pupil is patience. It would be a mistake to push a student too fast or to expect their vocabulary to increase too rapidly. Not only should a student learn how to read a word, he or she should also know the meaning of that word. One of my students could read the word continent, but had no idea what it meant, so we had a short lesson in geography as part of the lesson.

Flash cards are a very good teaching tool, just be sure to shuffle them from time to time. Having the student write a paragraph or two helps to make him or her more conscious of the spelling of words.

Always keep in mind that your student(s) can come from a variety of backgrounds, and teach accordingly.

Frank L. Metcalf

[Tutors were asked in a workshop to say what they think literacy means and to say why it is important. Here are some of their answers.]

Literacy is more than just reading and writing. It involves using these skills to improve one's life. Without good skills, an adult is often made to feel left out. Also, the non-reader cannot always take a full role in the community.

Gail Michelson

Participation in this workshop has involved many of the behaviors one calls literate behaviors. We have read; we have written; and we have talked. The goal of the workshop is to help us pass these behaviors on to our students, and in so doing, to pass on the power these behaviors can give them.

We will take this opportunity to engage in thinking about issues of great importance to us as literacy workers and we will use reading, writing, and discussion to do so. Literacy, as we are practicing it here, is an organically interconnected set of behaviors that extend and shape one's thinking and feelings about an issue of personal significance. I don't think of these behaviors as skills external and alien to the students. I'd like to demonstrate to the students that these skills are just extensions of a capacity to think which all of them possess.

That learning literate behaviors can empower students in practical ways, I do not deny. I do, however, base my teaching on the definition above. I like to give students opportunities to read about, write about, and talk about personally meaningful reading material, thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

Sharon W. Smith

When most people think of literacy, they associate it with reading and writing. To me, literacy is much more than these skills. With these skills, there comes a sense of self-identity, self worth, and the belief in one's ability to achieve any goal. Without these skills, functioning becomes a challenge. It means working around the system rather than participating in it and contributing to it as an equal. When a person must work from the outside, their choices are limited. Literacy enables someone to not only read and write, but also feel comfortable with their part in the overall system and to know they can initiate change, if they feel a need.

ANONYMOUS

What is Literacy? What are its values?

Literacy is the ability to read and write, in other words, the ability to interpret written language into meaningful thought, and the ability to code meaningful thoughts into written language.

The values of literacy are many; they are found in all areas of life, from the most basic to the most esoteric. They are found in everyday means of communication, such as reading street signs or restaurant menus, or in the need to write a telephone message for a co-worker. Without these skill, even the most common tasks can become an embarrassing burden. At the other end of the scale, writers use their literacy to convey the highest emotions known to them, and their readers use their literacy to be moved by it. And at every point in between, readers and writers use their skills almost constantly, often taking them for granted because they are always there.

Teri Fuller

APPENDIX

Summary of Langston Hughes's Story:

Thank you Ma'am

This story tells about a boy who tries to mug a woman named Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones. He tugs at her purse from behind and is knocked down by the weight of it. The woman grabs him by the shirt. She ends up taking him home with her. He washes his face while she talks to him. Then, she fixes dinner: cocoa, ham, and lima beans. She has her back to the boy, Roger, but he doesn't run away. He is too surprised by her being so nice.

Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones then gives Roger money for the shoes he wants and says, "Now, here, take this ten dollars and buy yourself some blue suede shoes." When he tried to steal the money in the street, that's what he wanted , blue suede shoes.

Roger leaves and tries to say thank you but "he couldn't even say that as he turned at the foot of the barren stoop and looked up at the large woman in the door."

My Grandparents

Darlene Weaver

I do not remember much about my grandparents.
I never knew my mother's father,
and all I remember about my grandmother
is what she used to tell me,
which isn't much
because she died when I was real young.

She was German, and she used to say
that there were no televisions to watch.
She used to tell me how cheap the food was.
Also, how different the clothes were.

My grandparents on my stepfather's side
used to live in Florida,
where they had a hotel.
We stayed there for eight months
when we were little.
I loved it out there.

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What is happening in this picture?

Read the story

Some parents say bad things about their children. Sometimes they say these things right to the child.

Talk and write

What is the mother communicating to her son in the picture?

_____

_____

How do you think her son feels?

_____

_____

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What would you do?

What is happening in this picture?

Read the story

Dad is asleep. He sleeps every day after work. He doesn't want anyone to bother him or wake him. Dad yells when anyone wakes him.

John is feeling sad. He wants to talk with his dad about the way he is feeling. John thinks, "Should I wake him, or should I wait until later?"

Talk and write

What do you think John should do?

_____

_____

Why?

_____

_____

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I like birds

birds fly

When I look at birds it

makes me think of

Freedom

I like to watch them

birds are like people

#1 26/90 A. Y

My name ~~is~~ is Winston. I am from Jamaica, I Work at Boonoonoonoos, ~~I~~ ~~is~~ it is a Jamaican bakery. In the bakery we cook chicken, curry goat and beef Patty. My ~~goat~~ goal is to get My drivers licenses, so I can go to night school. I Want to get a better Job so I can Make More Money.

a

My day wast vere good. frast I wand down to
hen I met I gril. her name was Brenda. she was a ver
trakia gril. we walk and talk all way then I ask her
of was she boing latter. on she sed she had to be
me, so I ask for her phonneder. She gave it to me.
after on I want to a frend house. my frend tack
e out to eat. after we act we went back to the no
then we got back we wast vido Test about all nigh
t starit to get late. so I want to go back
utside. me frends vere down star I want to go
the phonbooph to. call that gril I met down town.
call She was not home. I stait to walk. I want
ack to my fren house She had mad a pieca I had
pees it was good. about 4:00 in the monin
fel asecp got up about 6:00 and can har.

The End

RESPONSE FORM

We'd like your comments and suggestions. Please note them on the lines below. Also, please feel free to respond in writing to our authors. They would really be pleased to get your letters. Send them to the address below, in care of the author, and we will do our best to pass them along. Though we tried hard to catch typos etc., there still may be some. Let us know if you catch any. Thanks.

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or
If you know someone who needs help please contact

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